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J N HARE

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The Demesne Lessees of Fifteenth-Century Wiltshire¹

By J N HARE

I

THE leasing of the manorial demesnes was one of the main developments in the organization of the agrarian economy in the later Middle Ages. The great lords now ceased to cultivate their own demesne lands and began instead to rent them out for a specified and regular amount of cash or produce. But the precise significance of this development has been a source of debate. Did it help to produce a social transformation in the countryside? Were the great lords replaced as cultivators by innumerable village peasants?² Or were they replaced by wealthy outsiders or by men who were already well above the rest of the village population in wealth and social status?³ Although the lessees⁴ have traditionally been seen as emerging from the ranks of the prosperous village peasantry, more recent work has stressed the

importance of men who cannot usefully be called peasants and who must have employed labour on a substantial scale. Such work has been based partially, although not exclusively, on the study of individual estates. But how typical were the estates of the Archbishop of Canterbury or of the Abbot of Westminster? Were the gentry lessees on such estates the beneficiaries of patronage rather than the profiteers of the open market? As with so many problems in the economic and social history of this period, we need many more local and estate studies. The present article seeks to provide one such study, as a contribution to a continuing debate.

It is first necessary to establish the chronology of leasing in this county.⁵ The Wiltshire estates were generally slower than those in other parts of the country in leasing their demesnes. By 1380 leasing was still infrequent and it had made hardly any impact in the chalklands. Instead it was to be found particularly in the north of the county and, to a lesser extent, in the west and extreme south-east of the county. By 1400 leasing had begun to spread into the chalklands and had become the normal practice on the larger lay estates. Thus only three out of twenty-five documented lay manors seem to have been involved in direct cultivation in the period 1400–10. By contrast, leasing had still hardly begun on the ecclesiastical estates: by 1400 only six out of thirty-one such manors had been leased and these had tended to be

¹ This article incorporates a revised version of parts of my thesis: 'Lord and Tenant in Wiltshire, c. 1380 – c. 1520, with particular reference to regional and seigneurial variations' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1976). I am very grateful to Professors F R H Du Boulay and R R Davies for reading and commenting on an earlier draft of this article. I should also like to thank the owners and their archivists for allowing me to study their records.

² Eg J E T Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, Oxford, 1906, pp 274 f; A R Bridbury, *Economic Growth: England in the Later Middle Ages*, Hassocks, new edn 1975, pp 91–2. I have used the term peasant to refer to the holders of customary tenements who worked their own holdings essentially as a family unit and who provided for their own subsistence.

³ Eg F R H Du Boulay, 'Who were farming the English Demesnes at the End of the Middle Ages?', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser XVII, 1965, pp 443–55; B Harvey, 'The Leasing of the Abbot of Westminster's Demesnes in the Later Middle Ages', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser XXII, 1969, p 21, though neither writer suggests that peasant lessees were not important.

⁴ The term 'lessee', rather than the term 'farmer' has been used in order to avoid the ambiguity of the latter term.

⁵ For a fuller discussion of the chronology of leasing in Wiltshire, see my thesis, op cit, pp 100–15. I have here used the term 'leasing the demesne' to refer specifically to leases which included only the demesne, and 'leasing the manor' to include both leases of the demesne and leases of demesne and rents.

only the small and peripheral manors of their estates. By 1420 only two more of our ecclesiastical manors had been leased. Thus although on a national scale it may be concluded that, 'by 1422 the old regime of the manorial lords was practically dead',⁶ in Wiltshire direct cultivation still remained the norm on the ecclesiastical estates. It was not generally until the 1430s and 1440s that most ecclesiastical demesnes were leased. This late development of leasing may well have been common on the chalklands of Wessex.⁷ Furthermore, even after the abandonment of direct arable cultivation, many estates, both lay and more commonly ecclesiastical, continued to maintain large sheep flocks. On the Duchy of Lancaster manors of Aldbourne, Collingbourne and Everley, the arable had been leased by 1399, but large sheep flocks were maintained until 1443; while at Urchfont and All Cannings, which belonged to St Mary's nunnery at Winchester, the flocks were not leased until about 1477.

The Wiltshire demesnes were thus generally late in being leased, but the eventual adoption of these new methods does not seem to have been a response to falling profits in seigneurial agriculture.⁸ The major movements of prices and wages had occurred long before most of the demesnes had been leased. In general, the Wiltshire manors lack good records for the last years of demesne agriculture,⁹ but at Bromham, at least, there is no sign of any immediate crisis in seigneurial agriculture. Wiltshire agriculture, both peasant and seigneurial, was prosperous: a prosperity that was reflected in the movement of rents. For in most of the county rents were stable for the first half of the fifteenth

century, and in some places they even rose. Similarly, landlords seem to have had little difficulty in collecting their rents. For most of Wiltshire (other than in the north of the county and on a few poorer downland villages) it was only in the 1450s and 1460s, and under the impact of an acute depression in the cloth industry, that rents fell and landlords were unable to collect the bulk of their rent revenue. The growing industrial areas of south and west Wiltshire were providing the chalkland farmers with a growing market for the products of the soil: for wool, meat and grain, and thus helped to counter the impact of the general national demographic decline. This general agricultural prosperity would have both affected the chronology of leasing and the fortunes of the lessees themselves.¹⁰

When leasing occurred, the demesnes usually passed in one block to one man, rather than to a collective group.¹¹ There was, it is true, some piecemeal leasing of the demesnes while seigneurial cultivation still continued on the main block, but such a practice seems only to have been prevalent outside the chalklands, as at Bromham. In general, the demesnes survived intact. There were some collective leases that probably survived from the early stages of leasing, particularly in northern Wiltshire, but these were uncommon; thus at Oaksey in 1439, the demesne was held by a group of nine lessees, most of whom were also customary tenants of the manor.¹² Such collective leases did not survive in the chalklands, and the typical lease in the county as a whole was to one man alone.

II

Who then were leasing the demesnes? An attempt to answer this question has been

⁶ G Holmes, *The Later Middle Ages*, 1962, p 147.

⁷ As on the estates of St Swithun's Priory, Winchester; see J Greatrex, 'The Administration of Winchester Cathedral Priory in the time of Cardinal Beaufort' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Ottawa, 1973), appendix, p ii.

⁸ Hare, *op cit*, pp 129-32, 139-40, 342-4.

⁹ The most notable exception to this generalization is provided by the Bishop of Winchester's estate. This estate, however, was not included in my survey. Developments on the Battle Abbey manor of Bromham are considered in Hare, *op cit*, pp 338-44.

¹⁰ These sentences summarize the conclusions of a study of rent levels, entry fines, and arrears on a large number of manors throughout the country. See Hare, *op cit*, Ch III.

¹¹ Hare, *op cit*, pp 127-8.

¹² R Payne, 'Agrarian Conditions on the Wiltshire Estates of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Lords Hungerford and the Bishopric of Winchester' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1940), pp 274, 286.

made by building up as detailed a picture as possible of the individual lessees on fourteen Wiltshire manors before 1510. This study has been concerned with the men who were leasing wholesale the demesne arable or pasture. Other resources of the manor, such as rabbit warrens, mills, quarries, and rectory tithes were also leased, but to include them would result in needless complication and distract attention from the main problem of who took over the agricultural land of the manor.

The choice of manors for study was effectively determined by the survival of documentary material,¹³ for such a study could only be undertaken where the documentation was relatively good. The sample is too small for any claims to statistical validity, but it has the merit of including a wide variety of manors. Although it includes a preponderance of large manors, of the manors of large estates and of chalkland manors, this is never to the exclusion of other types. Those manors where the demesne was leased to a group of men rather than to an individual and which were found mainly in the north of the county have, however, been excluded. They were not typical of leasing in this county and to have included them in the calculations would have overweighted the results towards those who were involved in such collective leases. The following study centres around the lessees of our sample group of manors, but other lessees have been included in the discussion, where relevant.

In building up a picture of our lessees and their families the evidence of the manorial records — account rolls, court rolls and rentals — has been supplemented by other sources, such as wills, taxation returns, receivers' accounts and individual leases and deeds. To establish a picture of the background from which our lessees came, it was first necessary to look at the activities of

earlier members of the family; our material is far too limited to rely on information about the individual lessee himself. But the sources rarely provide us with any direct evidence about family relationships, and surnames have therefore had to be used as an indicator of family groups. That this is a reasonable assumption, at least in Wiltshire at this period, is suggested by a more general study of the contemporary manorial material.¹⁴ For it was rare for there to be more than two families with the same name, and when this did occur, a distinguishing *alias* was usually added. Thus the Weylot family of Durrington also produced a Weylot *alias* Carter and a Weylot *alias* Barbour family, although in the latter case the family seems later to have dropped the original name and became known by the alias alone. Families with the same name but occurring on different manors have not been linked, unless there is positive evidence suggesting a relationship between them. Thus when we find a Benger of Alton Barnes acting as a pledge for another Benger, who had come from outside to lease the demesne at Durrington, we may surely suggest the likelihood of some sort of family link. It must be stressed how fragmentary is our evidence. Our knowledge of individual families must inevitably be based on occasional glimpses into their land-holding or other activities. But the fragmentary nature of the evidence should not deter us from trying to ascertain what sort of men were leasing the Wiltshire demesnes.

The fourteen manors in our sample, provided a list of eighty-eight lessees from sixty-seven different families (Table 1). For some of these, little could be discovered about them except for their leasing activities. Thus we know nothing about thirteen of these families save that they leased a particular manor at a particular time. In attempting any quantitative analysis of these lessees a choice had to be made between the family and the individual, as fourteen of the families

¹³ The following manors were included: Enford, Stockton, Westwood, Wroughton, Aldbourne, Collingbourne (Ducis), Everley, Upavon, Durrington, Coombe Bissett, All Cannings, Urchfont, Kingston Deverill, Bromham.

¹⁴ Hare, *op cit*, pp 265–7.

TABLE 1
Leasing families on fourteen Wiltshire manors:
their origins

I <i>Local</i> (active in the village before they leased the demesne)	
Customary tenants	26
Unknown status	8
II <i>Foreign</i> (from families based outside the village)	
Customary tenants	1
Leased demesnes elsewhere	2
Gentlemen	1
Unknown status	7
III <i>Unknown origin</i>	
Unknown before they leased	14
Unknown before and after they leased	13
Total	68

NB Sixty-seven families are known to have leased on the fourteen manors up to 1510, and fourteen of these also leased elsewhere. The Harvests have been included both as a local customary family (for Urchfont) and as a family of foreign lessees (for All Cannings and Durrington). This accounts for the additional entry in the total.

produced two or more lessees. In view of the limitations of the evidence it was considered that analysis in terms of individuals might have distorted the results by giving undue prominence to a few well-documented families. Calculations have therefore been based on families rather than on individuals. It must be stressed here that the family has been used as a means of studying the background from which came our lessees. For the nature of the evidence means that the easiest way of ascertaining this is to look at the activities of fathers or of other relatives. The use of the family should not necessarily imply that there were close economic ties between the farming of the lessee and that of the rest of his family. No doubt, there was often a general co-operation within such families, although our sources are usually silent, but in the main men sought to acquire an independent agricultural

holding. This they were usually able to accomplish, as the study of rentals and court rolls makes clear.

III

As work elsewhere has shown, the lessees were very varied in composition, ranging from local peasants, often of villein origin, to the gentry and wealthy outsiders. But an analysis of the lessees in our sample, summarized in Table 1, highlights the importance of one particular group. For of sixty-seven families in the survey, at least twenty-six were drawn from the ranks of local customary tenants. Moreover, while this figure constitutes 39 per cent of the sample, it is almost certainly an underestimate of the importance of this group. The use of the surname merely provides an indication of descent through fathers, but not through mothers. Furthermore, the documentary limitations conceal the local origins of some lessees. A further eight lessees can be shown to have been active in their respective village before they leased the demesne there, although no record survives of their tenurial status. Finally, nothing is known about twenty-seven lessees and their families in the period before they undertook the leasing of the demesne. Occasionally, enough documents survive for a particular manor to suggest that such a family had indeed come from outside the manor. This is confirmed by other sources for the Bengers and Harvests who both first came to Durrington as lessees and who were linked to families based on Alton Barnes and Urchfont respectively. But such cases are rare. For most manors, the documentary evidence is too fragmentary for us to attach significance to any lack of earlier references. It is clear therefore that at least a large minority, and probably a majority, of the leasing families came from those who had previously been customary tenants of the manor where they later leased the demesne.

However, we can provide a fuller picture of this major group of lessees. Some of the families were to be found on their manor a

century or more before they became lessees, and for some this long-standing tenure on the manor was symbolized in their continued burden of serfdom. At least five families of demesne lessees retained their unfree status into the fifteenth century, at a time when such survival was unusual, though like the Gerveys and the Mascall families they later gained their manumission. But as would be expected, in view of the mobility of the tenant population in this period,¹⁵ other lessees were drawn from among relatively recent immigrants to the village. Families like the Langfords of Durrington did not appear until the fifteenth century, and thus also escaped the personal disabilities of serfdom.

In general, the lessees and the families in this major group were among the tenants of the large standard customary tenements, whether these were virgates, as at Durrington, or half-virgates, as at Stockton. Thus at Stockton in the 1350s there were two ancestors of later lessees, and both held half-virgates.¹⁶ At Durrington the 1388 rental includes the families of three future lessees. One had accumulated a virgate and an additional cottage and few acres, another was temporarily holding two virgates, while a third held no more than a single virgate.¹⁷ The lessees thus came from among the more substantial families of the village, but from a broad based village minority, and not necessarily from among the largest customary tenants. Occasionally the family included someone who was a cottager, but not for long. A newcomer might start as a cottager, either as a craftsman or agricultural labourer, while the son of a substantial tenant farmer might take his first step to independence by setting up home in a cottage. But the ready availability of land meant that such men, and certainly those capable of leasing a demesne, soon moved on to a standard customary tenement.

These lessees came from families who were accustomed to playing an active role in village life. Eight of our lessees had earlier acted as reeve and in addition one had acted as rent collector and another had a father who had been reeve.¹⁸ Now these ten examples may not appear particularly significant when compared with the sixty-seven families in the sample or even with the twenty-four families of local customary tenants. But this figure is a clear underestimate. Very few account rolls survive for Wiltshire manors in the last days of seigneurial cultivation. Our knowledge of who acted as reeve on these manors in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries is therefore very poor.

These lessees had also held other positions of responsibility. They were to be found in charge of the lord's flocks, as a juror for the collection of a royal subsidy, and as reapeeves. Others can be seen playing an active role in the administration of law and order in the village, acting as, for example, pledges and tithing men.¹⁹ In addition to the routine pledging these families are also occasionally seen supporting other lessees. When Richard atte Mere leased Durrington in 1389, John Gilberd was one of two other men who pledged themselves for £100 to secure Richard's lease.²⁰ Such a task clearly required men of greater wealth and repute than the normal pledge. Later John himself became a lessee. Similarly, when John Stannford leased Collingbourne in 1443, his two pledges were both future lessees. Other lessees were to be found in roles additional to their agricultural and administrative ones. They are commonly

¹⁵ Discussed in Hare, *op cit*, pp 265-72.

¹⁶ BM: Add Roll 24394.

¹⁷ Winchester College Muniments (hereafter 'WCM'): 5596; 5950, 5954, 5956.

¹⁸ Thomas Goddard and John Runte at Aldbourne, Richard Cantelowe, Richard Batte and Richard Webbe at Collingbourne, John Daniel at Kingston Deverill, Robert atte Mere at Durrington, and Nicholas atte Mulle at Coombe Bissett (Payne, *op cit*, p 284; PRO: DL 29/710/11446, 737/12071, 737/12076; WRO: 192/32; WCM, 5650a, 4622); John Colet at All Cannings (WRO 192/28); John Gerveys at Enford (Winchester Cathedral Library (hereafter WCL)). Register of the Dean and Chapter, formerly of the Cathedral Priory, vol I f 33).

¹⁹ PRO: DL 29/683/11061; BM: Add Roll 19719; *Feudal Aids*, 1908, V, p 233; WCM: 5650 k.

²⁰ WCM: 5650 m. For another example see PRO: DL 29/685/11087, m2.

found as brewers who regularly broke the assize. The social origins of this group of lessees are thus essentially those of the 'main' families of the village in pre-leasing days:²¹ the substantial tenants of the village whose judicial and administrative activities formed an essential factor in the smooth running of the community. Such lessees were men whose wealth and experience best suited them to the responsibilities of leasing the demesnes.

The role of such local leasing families can perhaps best be seen by looking briefly at an individual and well-documented example. John Hickes leased the demesne at Durrington from 1401 until his death in 1413/14.²² He came of a long-established family of Durrington customary tenants, which had held a virgate or more in 1334/35, 1359 and 1388. In 1411/12 John Hickes held three virgates, and with two others held an additional virgate.²³ Already before he had leased the demesne, John had raised himself far above most of the other customary tenants, though this was not a typical development. But the family was not to last. After his death his lands passed to his son or brother William, but the latter died not long afterwards and in 1428 his widow surrendered her lands.²⁴ The Hickes family was certainly no stranger to responsibility: John Hickes was reeve in 1357–59, and John Hickes, the future lessee, was rent collector from 1399–1401.²⁵ It held other influential posts in the local community, such as those of tithing man and assessor to the manorial court.²⁶ Members of the family could often be found as pledges, including pledging for another lessee.²⁷ As in the 1390s they were regularly to be found as brewers. But legally the family remained a

villain one, as entries in 1391 and 1396 make clear.²⁸ A similar picture of the background and activity of a leasing family could be provided for the Mascalls and Shilvingstoles of Stockton, or for the atte Mere's of Durrington.²⁹

In origin, at least, these men may aptly be described as peasants. But the leasing of the demesnes and the extensive scale of their agriculture provided the opportunities for men to rise beyond the level of the rest of the village peasantry. Thus when later, in 1545, a very selective benevolence was levied, its contributors included a number who were descended from the customary 'peasant' lessees: a Mascal at Stockton, a Goddard and a Shepherd at Aldbourne, and a Cerle at Enford.³⁰ But not all prospered, and Robert Hopkyns *alias* Shilvingstole of Stockton provides a cautionary corrective. When he died, a few years after having leased the demesne there, nothing could be raised for his heriot 'for he had no goods or chattels'.³¹ Even if we should not take this phrase literally, it suggests that, at the very least, Robert's position was not a very prosperous one.

We must now consider those families for which no local customary provenance can be established. Some merely provide very shadowy figures who only appear when they are leasing the demesne. There are thirteen families about which we know nothing prior to the start of the lease or subsequent to its termination. In part such ignorance may result from the fragmentary nature of the documentation, but in other cases it probably represents the reality of the situation. For here were substantial 'foreigners' whose involvement in the village was only temporary.

For some families we are able to demonstrate that they came from outside the manor.

²¹ On the concept of the 'main' families applied to medieval villages see J A Raftis, 'The Concentration of Responsibility in five Villages', in *Medieval Studies*, 1966, pp 92–118.

²² WCM: 5956–5969.

²³ WCM: 5601 a, 5601 C, 5596, 13373.

²⁴ WCM: 5655 q.

²⁵ WCM: Index (Durrington Account Rolls); WCM 5954–5.

²⁶ WCM: 5650 a, 5655 t.

²⁷ WCM: 5650 r & m.

²⁸ WCM: 5650 k & p.

²⁹ The Mascalls and Shilvingstole families are discussed in Hare, *op cit*, pp 209–12. For the atte Meres see the Durrington records in WCM.

³⁰ G D Ramsay (ed), *Two sixteenth-century Taxation Lists*, Wiltshire Record Society (hereafter WRS), X, 1954.

³¹ BM: Add Roll 24382.

Not surprisingly, some of these 'foreign' lessees were drawn from the tenants, customary or otherwise, of neighbouring manors, and often came from a similar social environment to the customary tenants that we have already considered. The Pynkeney family leased the demesne at Upavon in the late fifteenth century, but they were initially described as 'of Rushall' (a neighbouring village).³² John Gyffgor was a customary tenant at Durrington, but also leased the demesne at neighbouring Knighton.³³ Other examples include John Thurborne of Amesbury who leased at Durrington,³⁴ and the Potter family at Coombe Bissett.³⁵

In other cases it is clear that the lessee had come from much further away, although we can then rarely say anything about their social and economic background. But the origins of one such lessee can be particularly well documented and he certainly came from a family of customary tenants. Thomas Weylot *alias* Barbour leased the demesne at Coombe Bissett in the period 1491–1523 and established a family there.³⁶ He was a newcomer to the manor, for he does not occur on any of the plentiful earlier records. But he was evidently a villein of one of Winchester College's other manors, for the College administration took exceptional pains to stress his personal servility, and even described him on the account rolls as a bondman. No doubt it feared that the change of scene might lead Thomas to be regarded, like other foreigners, as a freeman. Fortunately, the records for the College's manor of Durrington, twelve miles away, show that it was from here that he came, and enable us to examine his family background before he moved to Coombe Bissett. For the Durrington records show the presence of a family with both the same surname and the same *alias*, namely Weylot

alias Barbour. Here the Weylots provided many of the substantial and influential members of the village community. They figure regularly on the rentals from 1359/60, holding a half-virgate then and in 1388/89. In 1411/12 one of them held a virgate and another a virgate and additional few acres. Thereafter the family seems to have proliferated, and in 1444 six members of the family were included on the rental. John Weylot *alias* Barbour then held two cottages and eight acres, much less than the others.³⁷ The Weylots played an active part in village administration acting as hayward, ale-taster, tithing-man, assessor to the manorial court, and as rent collectors. They were also to be found acting as pledges for, and executor to, other members of the village community.³⁸ With so many younger sons to support, the Weylots were to be found in several occupations other than those of customary tenant. They provided servants to other lessees, a shepherd, a barber, and a carter, and several who broke the assize of ale.³⁹ But the family was still a bond or villein one. A Thomas Weylot had probably managed to secure his manumission, as he was found heading the free jurors in 1484 and 1485.⁴⁰ But the court rolls show that even in the later fifteenth century the family was regarded as a bond one, although some of its members were certainly trying to throw off this personal servility. One member had left to live in a neighbouring village and after his death had his will proved in the Probate Court of Canterbury, although at his death he was still described on the court rolls as a bondman.⁴¹ Although it is rare for the social origins of our foreign lessees to be so well documented, this example shows how they could be drawn from among the customary tenantry elsewhere, and how they could move some

³² Payne, *op cit*, p 304, PRO: Prob 11/14/20.

³³ WCM: 5655 n.

³⁴ WCM: 5655 u & p, 5603 d, 20013.

³⁵ WCM: 4646–93, 4351 b, 13373, 4396–7; E A Fry (ed), *Abstracts of Wiltshire Inquisitiones Post Mortem*, I, Devizes, 1902–8, p 332.

³⁶ WCM: 4721–52, 4354; PRO: Prob 11/21/12.

³⁷ WCM: 5601 C, 5596, 13373, 5603 d.

³⁸ Eg WCM: 5655 b, 6047, 6034–72, 6073–9, 5656 d, e, g, j, l, m; 5655, t, l. It should be pointed out that pledging entries are uncommon in the fifteenth-century court rolls.

³⁹ Eg WCM: 5950, 5655 e, n, j, 5650 s, 5656 e.

⁴⁰ WCM: 5656 g.

⁴¹ WCM: 5656 i & m; PRO: Prob 11/21/12.

distance in order to undertake the leasing of the demesne.

IV

The lessees that we have so far considered may all be described as peasants or villagers. Although they generally came from among the more substantial members of the village community, they were not markedly distinguishable in wealth, tenure or personal status from the rest of the village population. But while this group probably provided the bulk of the Wiltshire lessees, we also have evidence of men whose wealth and range of interests clearly separated them from the rest of the village community. This is the case despite the absence of the highest ranks of county society from among those who leased the demesne here. In our sample only one lessee was described as a gentleman or a knight.⁴² The limited involvement of such men was probably typical of the county as a whole. The many additional records that have been consulted have revealed no other knight leasing a demesne, only one esquire (John Fferres at Oaksey),⁴³ and only six who were described as gentlemen.⁴⁴

But below this small group of lessees was a group of men who, although they were not described as gentlemen, cannot usefully be called peasants. They were men of substance and standing beyond the boundaries of the village where they leased the demesne. The steward of the manor, for example, was a freeman of more than parochial standing who was capable of maintaining the lord's judicial rights. But they were also to be found acting as lessees, as with John Westbury at Kingston

Deverill⁴⁵ and Thomas Terrante at Enford.⁴⁶ In addition, members of the baronial households also acted as lessees, so that on the Hungerford estate the lessees included the receiver-general (Gregory Westeby at Winterborne Stoke) and the stockman (John Clayden at Sutton Veny).⁴⁷

The wealth and range of activities of such greater yeomen or petty gentry may clearly be seen in the life of John Stannford, a man whose scale of operations had nothing in common with that of the local village population. He was described as 'of Ross-hale',⁴⁸ but his activities spread far beyond that small Wiltshire village. He was an important figure in the administration of the Duchy of Lancaster estates, for he was stockman of the southern parts of the Duchy. Moreover, this was at a time when the sheep-rearing and grazing activities of these manors became most centralized and co-ordinated under the direction of the feoffees of Henry V's will. His responsibility covered the Wiltshire manors of Aldbourne, Berwick, Collingbourne, and Everley, and also manors in Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset. He had to tour these manors seeing to the upkeep of the stock, selling wool and sheep and buying new stock. Something of the scale of his responsibilities may be gauged from the amounts he spent on buying new stock, for in 1432/33 he spent £85 8s 4d (buying 846 wethers) and in 1436/37 he spent £67 13s 4d.⁴⁹ When, a few years later, the duchy ended its direct involvement in pastoral farming and leased out its pastures, it was perhaps not surprising that he should figure prominently

⁴² Sir Walter Hungerford at Everley, PRO: DL 29/694/11235.

⁴³ Payne op cit, p 304.

⁴⁴ Thomas Horton at Westwood after 1518, Richard Hugys alias Baker at Cricklade, John Westley, John Pareham, William Powey, and Richard Page at Brixton Deverill. WCL: Box 40/50, Salisbury Diocesan Record Office (hereafter Sal D & C): Reg. Burgh f 18, Muniments of King's College, Cambridge (hereafter KCM): Ledger Book I, fols 28, 48, 187 and 5. On Page, who was not described as a gentleman on the lease, see Hare, op cit, p 320.

⁴⁵ WRO: 192/32. The Westburys were an important local gentry family. J L Kirby, *The Hungerford Family in the later Middle Ages*, (unpublished MA thesis, University of London, 1939) appendix D; *Victoria County History of Wiltshire* (hereafter VCH), V, 1957, p 34; J S Davies (ed) *The Tropenell Cartulary*, Devizes, 1908, *passim*.

⁴⁶ BM: Harleian Roll V 22.

⁴⁷ Payne, op cit, pp 280-1. Westeby's lease, however, was granted as a financial reward as he lived rent-free on the demesne.

⁴⁸ Eg PRO: DL 29/685/11087; *Cal Close Rl Hen VI*, III, p 495.

⁴⁹ PRO: DL 29/710/11433, 11436.

among the lessees and he leased the large demesnes of Collingbourne and Everley. To stock these he bought the existing duchy flocks there, and was to pay £76 17s 3d for 1,074 sheep.⁵⁰ Stannfords's leasing operations were, moreover, even more extensive than this would suggest. He was already leasing the sheep pastures at Upavon from 1423, and by 1448 he leased the whole of the western part of Upavon.⁵¹ In 1439 he had gained a seven-year period of custody on the manor of an alien priory at Charlton.⁵² Then came the leases at Collingbourne and Everley, and finally in the period 1439–52 he was leasing Rushall.⁵³ It is noticeable that all these manors are to be found in a very restricted part of the county, with each manor lying adjacent, or almost adjacent, to another of the manors on which he had secured a lease. The scale of his agricultural activities thus marked him off from the peasant lessees or from the rest of the village population. As to his origins, earlier references to a Stannford family in this area suggest that he came from a family of substantial freemen.⁵⁴ Interestingly John himself was apparently rector of Rushall.⁵⁵ The family remained prominent in this area in the later fifteenth century.⁵⁶

There were also other lessees whose interests lay outside the manor, but who were primarily merchants or industrialists. None have so far been found among the lessees in our sample, but work on other manors has shown the involvement of such men. At Westwood, but just after our period, Thomas Horton leased the manor (1518–42). He was noted in this part of the country as a great clothier, and was one of three specifically

mentioned by Leland, as pre-eminent in the Bradford — Trowbridge cloth area.⁵⁷ The family's fortunes seem to have been established by his father, John. His cloth-making activities had flourished and by the time of his death he was able to make generous benefactions to churches and his family. His cloth-making interests passed to his second son, the Thomas Horton of our lease. Thomas evidently flourished in the trade, rising to wealth and fame as one of the most important cloth producers of his time. He was variously described as clothier, clothman, clothmaker, merchant, and gentleman — a combination which points both to his industrial and trading activities, and to the social status which his wealth had achieved for him. Some of this wealth he used to establish a chantry and school at Bradford, and other funds were used in his building operations. The latter included houses at Bradford and Trowbridge, as well as extensive building works at the manor house and church of Westwood, where he leased the manor.⁵⁸

The other merchants who were demesne lessees are much more shadowy figures. A John Goddard of Marlborough leased at Mildenhall in 1439.⁵⁹ He was probably the same as the John Goddard of Poulton (a small neighbouring village to Marlborough and Mildenhall), whose will was drawn up in 1443 and proved in 1454.⁶⁰ His will shows a man of great wealth and with very close connections with Marlborough, which was one of the largest towns in the county and an important industrial and trading centre.⁶¹ His bequests included £16 13s 4d to various churches in the area and to the cathedral. He left to his son all his lands and rents in Marlborough, £140 in cash and a debt of £20 still

⁵⁰ PRO: DL 29/685/11087.

⁵¹ PRO: DL 29/682/11058.

⁵² *Cal Close Rl Hen VI*, III, p 495.

⁵³ PRO: SC 6/1057/1 & 2.

⁵⁴ C R Elrington (ed), *Abstracts of Feet of Fines relating to Wiltshire for the reign of Edward III*, WRS: XXIX, 1974, p 145; PRO: E 179/194/42a.

⁵⁵ T Phillpotts, *Institutiones Clericorum in Comitatu Wiltoniae*, 1297–1810, privately printed, 1825, p 129.

⁵⁶ William Stannford leased at Upavon from 1455 (PRO: DL 37/53) and there are frequent references to him in the Tropenell Cartulary from 1458 to 1485.

⁵⁷ WCL: 40/50. On Horton see E M Carus-Wilson, 'The Woollen Industry before 1550' in VCH IV, 1959, pp 141–2.

⁵⁸ On his building works at the manor-house of Westwood see D Sutton, *Westwood Manor* (National Trust), 1962.

⁵⁹ PRO: SC 6/1056/10.

⁶⁰ PRO: Prob 11/1/10 fol 78v.

⁶¹ Hare, op cit, pp 79–80, 87, 91.

owed to him, and an extensive list of silverware and chests. His daughter was to receive various household goods and 500 sheep, and the cash alone given away to his friends, executors and servants totalled £19. We do not know precisely how John had acquired such wealth, although his link with a mercer of London and the strength of his Marlborough connections suggest that his fortunes may have come from trading activities. His links with Robert Baron, a London mercer, were sufficiently close for Robert to hold £100 of his money and to be one of his executors. His largest bequests to churches (after that to Aldbourne, which was probably his village of origin) went to the three parochial churches of Marlborough and to the Carmelites there. In addition, another executor who held £40 of his money was William Dolman of Marlborough. Finally, if his son and daughter died without heir, his lands and rents in Marlborough were to pass to the mayor and commonalty of Marlborough.

There are few other men, apart from Horton and Goddard, who can be shown to have been closely involved in trade or industry. Only two Salisbury merchants have been identified as lessees anywhere in the county: Nicholas Noble leased Homington, and John Welles, a butcher, leased at Little Durnford.⁶² In addition, the Richard Page of Warminster who leased Brixton Deverill in 1455 was presumably the same person as Richard Page of Warminster, merchant, who had leased some land there from the Chapter of Salisbury a few years before.⁶³ But since there was little value in describing the lessee's occupation on the account roll, or even on the lease, this small group must surely provide an underestimate of merchants' involvement in leasing. Of our examples, only two are given an occupational description on the lease and some of our unknown 'foreign' lessees were probably merchants.

We can thus see a significant group of lessees who, as merchants, officials and large-scale agriculturalists, were separated from the rest of the village by wealth, status and interests. But another feature that emerges from this study is the presence of families who repeatedly leased demesnes: we find both families who leased on several different manors, and those who leased it on one manor but for several generations. Such families had already been involved in agriculture on a larger scale than that of the rest of the village. They may have emerged originally from the ranks of the customary tenant families, but their wealth and interests soon spread beyond that of their native village. The members of such families probably often acted as independent farmers, although there was probably also an element of co-operation. But no doubt they were helped in acquiring a lease by earlier experience of large-scale agriculture or by family help in securing the lease, either through the provision of supporting pledges or in less formal ways.

The Goddards of Aldbourne provide a good example of a family who leased on several different manors. They came from a long-established family of Aldbourne tenants. In 1379 Walter Goddard was a free tenant there and three other Goddards contributed to the poll tax.⁶⁴ They had also held customary land, as the 1431 account roll refers to a messuage and virgate, formerly held by Richard Goddard for rent and works, although it was now leased.⁶⁵ The family may have been involved in leasing from an early stage, for in 1398 a Thomas Goddard was leasing the neighbouring manor of Hinton.⁶⁶ But it is only in the middle of the following century that our information becomes much fuller. Then the family provided two lessees: both men of substance, but whose wealth had probably been derived from very different sources.

⁶² KCM: Ledger Book I, fol 61, 72, 91; *Tropenell Cartulary* II, p 281.

⁶³ KCM: Ledger Book I, fol 5; Sal D & C, Reg Burgh, p 11.

⁶⁴ PRO: E 179/239/193/IIa.

⁶⁵ PRO: DL 29/683/11061.

⁶⁶ PRO: DL 29/737/12073.

We have already considered the probable urban and trading links of John Goddard of Marlborough and Poulton. He was also a lessee, leasing the demesne at Mildenhall from 1451 until at least 1456,⁶⁷ and was eventually succeeded by a John Goddard of Lydiard. His link with the Aldbourne family of the same name is suggested by his will, for its church was to have his largest single bequest to any church, while several Aldbourne men were also among the beneficiaries. His interests seem to have mainly been in trade, but his contemporary, a Thomas Goddard of Aldbourne, seems to have concentrated on agriculture. The latter acted as lessee and reeve at Aldbourne from 1443. He had earlier been a reeve there⁶⁸ and was evidently a man of means. When he became lessee he undertook to pay £61 17s 6d for the 825 wethers of the existing duchy flock, and in the same year he acted as a pledge for the new lessee of the duchy manor of Chipping Lambourne in Berkshire.⁶⁹ Finally, in 1445 he, or a relation with the same name, undertook the leasing of the demesnes at Ogbourne for an annual rent of £50.⁷⁰

By 1460 Thomas had ceased to be lessee at Aldbourne, but this position was retaken by the Goddards in 1468 and they then retained it into the sixteenth century. Richard Goddard leased Aldbourne until 1507, when he was succeeded by a John Goddard.⁷¹ For Ogbourne no evidence survives for the period between 1445 and 1500. But in 1500 Richard's brother John became the lessee, with Richard acting as a pledge for him.⁷² At his death in the following year the same John was also leasing the manor of Eaton.⁷³ In the sixteenth century the family continued to

dominate the lease at Ogbourne, with a Thomas securing it in 1510 and Anthony and another Thomas in 1520.⁷⁴ Finally, a Thomas Goddard leased the manor of Overton, belonging to St Swithun's Priory, Winchester, in 1512.⁷⁵

The leasing activities of the Goddard family point clearly to the way in which a family could lease several manors and produce several generations of lessees. It should be noted, however, that, as with the activities of John Stannford, the manors concerned were concentrated in one part of the county. As a result, at least in part, of these extensive agricultural activities the Goddards rose to great wealth. In the 1525 lay subsidy returns John Goddard was credited with goods to the value of £440 while Thomas Goddard at Ogbourne was assessed at £640.⁷⁶ With this increase in wealth came an accompanying rise in status, though this was rather delayed. Throughout the fifteenth century the Goddards were merely referred to as husbandmen and in 1478 they were even accused of being villeins.⁷⁷ But by 1510 Thomas Goddard of Ogbourne was being referred to as a gentleman.⁷⁸ Finally, the family maintained links with trade. We have already considered the career of John Goddard of Marlborough, and in the 1478 case the list of Goddards included a William Goddard of London. But the interaction between trade and agriculture can perhaps be seen most clearly in the will of a Richard Goddard who died in far-off London in 1505, apprenticed to a grocer. Although a mere apprentice he had two sizeable bequests to dispose of: the 100 sheep and two cows left by his father and which were in the possession of his cousin, Thomas Goddard of Ogbourne; and the 100

⁶⁷ PRO: SC 6/1056/13-14.

⁶⁸ Payne, *op cit*, p 284.

⁶⁹ PRO: DL 29/685/11087.

⁷⁰ KCM: Ledger Book I fol 8.

⁷¹ Payne, *op cit*, p 302; PRO: DL 29/693/11226 & 9.

⁷² KCM: Ledger Book I, fol 172. It is possible that John had already been leasing the demesne before this (the 1478 case refers to a John Goddard of Ogbourne St George) and that the Goddards had dominated the lease for most or part of the intervening period.

⁷³ PRO: Prob 11/12/23.

⁷⁴ KCM: Ledger Book I, fol 226, 241. Thomas had died in 1517 according to his brass: E Kite, *The Monumental Brasses of Wiltshire*, Facsimile Edition, Bath, 1969, plate XVII.

⁷⁵ WCL: Register D & C II, fol 74.

⁷⁶ PRO: E 179/161.

⁷⁷ *The Goddard Family* (Wiltshire Archaeological Society MSS vol 241) provides a transcript of the case taken from the *de banco* roll for 18 Edward IV.

⁷⁸ KCM: Ledger Book I, fol 226.

sheep and two sacks of wool bequeathed by his Uncle Richard.⁷⁹

Other families or individuals also leased several demesnes. The Harveys were a family of customary tenants at Urchfont, active in village life and apparently little different in origin from the rest of the village population.⁸⁰ They leased the demesne, with one possible exception, from at least 1452 to 1510. In addition, other members of the family leased the demesne at Durrington from 1478 to 1512, and at All Cannings (a neighbouring manor to Urchfont) from 1498 to at least 1517.⁸¹ Another example, though coming from a rather different social background, is provided by the Benger family of Alton Barnes. They were a family of freeholders there and were probably linked to a prominent local gentry family of the same name. They leased the demesne in Alton Barnes in 1484 and 1531.⁸² In addition, Thomas Benger and then Richard Benger leased at Durrington from 1512 to 1525. When Thomas first undertook the lease he was supported by Richard Benger of Alton Barnes who acted as his pledge.⁸³ Finally, the Martyn family of Durrington leased the demesnes at Brigmerston, Enford and Amesbury Earls.⁸⁴ We must bear in mind that the chance of documentation surviving for more than one of a family's leases (since our evidence does not come from the family's

own muniments) is extremely small and that it is difficult to establish that two lessees are in fact the same person or members of the same family. In the light of this our five families become much more significant. Such individuals or families were now leasing several demesnes from different lords, usually in a limited area. We are thus seeing a regrouping of the organization of agriculture, and the emergence of a group of men whose agricultural activities spread beyond a single estate. It is a development which is concealed by the tradition of studying an individual estate.

The long length of time for which some leasing families were able to maintain control of the demesnes must also have helped to separate the lessees from the rest of the village population. The Goddards and the Harveys leased the demesnes at Aldbourne and Urchfont almost continuously from the 1450s well into the sixteenth century. Such a pattern was also found elsewhere. Thus in our sample fourteen families are found who provided at least two successive lessees, and some of these provided more than two. At Collingbourne Ducis three members of the Duper family leased the demesne from 1461 to 1522.⁸⁵ Finally at Kingston Deverill John Danyell, his wife and then Stephen Danyell leased the demesne from 1446 to 1487. It was then held by a newcomer, although he had probably already married, or was later to marry Stephen's widow.⁸⁶

V

What conclusions can therefore be drawn as to the kind of men who were leasing the Wiltshire demesnes? The evidence clearly points to the great diversity of such men,

⁷⁹ PRO: Prob 11/15/20.

⁸⁰ Eg WRO: 192/20 c, mm 3, 5, 30; 1, 21, 23; Winchester City Records (now in Hampshire Record Office) Shelf 13 box 6, Urchfont Court Roll; see also Hare, *op cit*, pp 229–31.

⁸¹ The only exception at Urchfont was Robert Wylkins, although he probably married into the family (Hare, *op cit*, p 230). For Durrington see WCM: 6034–66, 20015, 22992 fol 158 v, and for All Cannings WRO: 192/28.

⁸² PRO: Prob 11/21/29; J E T Rogers, *A History of Wages and Prices*, Oxford, 1882, III, pp 709–10. The Bengers were a prominent local legal and gentry family.

⁸³ WCM: 22992 fol 167 v, & 6068.

⁸⁴ WCM: 5656 b; B M Harleian Roll X/18–22; R B Pugh, 'The Early History of the Manors in Amesbury', in *WAM*: LII, 1947–48, 98. Although in this case we have no more than the identical combinations of names and their close proximity to Durrington to link these lessees to the Durrington family.

⁸⁵ PRO: DL 29/687/11134 — 694/11246. In the latter year he was still leasing the demesne and had eight years left of his thirty-one-year lease.

⁸⁶ WRO: 192/32. The relationship is suggested by their wills (PRO: Prob 11/8/11 & 17/25). Bartram came from outside, probably from Winterbourne Martyn in Dorset, where he had intended to found a chantry using lands he possessed there.

ranging from villeins to a knight, from peasant farmers to wealthy merchants. But such a study also points to more positive conclusions. The leasing of the demesnes provided great opportunities for the peasantry to expand their scale of agriculture, and it was the peasant families who, above all else, took advantage of this leasing. Local customary tenants provided by far the largest group (and probably the majority) of leasing families. In addition, men from a similar background were leasing demesnes outside their own village. Such men came from the substantial village tenantry, the holders of the larger standard tenements, men who had played an active part in village life and had often already had experience as manorial and village officials.

By contrast, the higher ranks of county society, the knights and esquires and gentlemen, only infrequently provided lessees. We thus have a very different picture from that on the estates of the Archbishop of Canterbury, where under Archbishop Warham (1502–32) about a third were so described.⁸⁷ There was, however, an important intermediate group in Wiltshire: men who, although they lacked the recognition of gentility, were clearly men of influence and standing beyond the confines of their own local community or village. Whatever their social origins may have been, they were now men of substance who would have to be treated with respect by the manorial lord and his administration.⁸⁸ Some were men who took part in the administration of the great estates, some were involved in industry and trade, while others were involved in large-scale agriculture. Some were men who had emerged out of the ranks of the village peasantry, but who now towered over the rest of the village community in wealth, and had now extended their influence and activities into the neighbouring villages.

Such, men, like the other lessees, appear to have acted as farmers rather than as rentiers. Unfortunately, very little is known about the

conduct of agriculture, on the demesne once this had been leased. Very few leases survive, but these often specifically forbid sub-leasing without the lord's consent.⁸⁹ The detailed provisions concerning the maintenance of the demesne also suggest that at least the greater part of the demesne remained under the direct cultivation of the lessee. Moreover, where subleasing took place, this could be of the whole demesne or manor, as occurred on one occasion at Durrington. When William Harvest renewed his lease here in 1498 he was allowed to sublease it, but only to his brother John.⁹⁰ In the same year William left Durrington to lease the larger demesne at All Cannings and John became lessee at Durrington. The wills of the lessees also suggest that they were involved in agriculture on a large scale. The will of John Goddard of Ogbourne, for example, refers specifically to 1,100 sheep which belonged to him and which were held in three flocks.⁹¹ Stephen Danyell, a lessee at Kingston Deverill, bequeathed at least 500 sheep in his will.⁹² Such benefactions may well not represent the total size of their flocks, but simply those which were included in specific benefactions. Moreover, the large scale of sheep farming is also indicated by the scale of sheep purchases made from the Duchy of Lancaster by John Stannford and Thomas Goddard when they first leased the duchy demesnes. The general impression of the documents is therefore that the lessees were agriculturalists rather than rentiers.

But such large-scale agricultural activity may seem to conflict with the general picture of the later Middle Ages as one of high wages and low profits. Very little is known directly about the profitability of leasing since we lack documents concerning the lessee's agricultural activities. But some general points

⁸⁹ WCM: 22992 fol 58 v.

⁹⁰ WCM: 22992 fol 158. This should presumably be seen as a reversion clause rather than as strictly allowing sub-leasing.

⁹¹ PRO: Prob 11/12/13.

⁹² PRO: Prob 11/8/11.

⁸⁷ Du Boulay, loc cit, p 450.

⁸⁸ Ibid, pp 444–5.

may safely be made. Although the early leasing in the early and middle fourteenth century may have been a seigneurial response to falling profits, this does not seem to have been the case in the fifteenth century in Wiltshire. Prices were then fluctuating but with no downward trend, and demesne agriculture survived intact until the final decision to lease the demesne wholesale. At Bromham at least, the leasing of the demesnes did not result in any significant fall in the lord's income.⁹³ Here, the prosperity and demands of an extensive and wealthy urban and industrial population helped to maintain the profits of agriculture, both of peasants and of lords.⁹⁴ Thus, with the exception of the north of the county, Wiltshire saw generally rising or static rents, despite what was happening elsewhere in England. The close links between arable farming and the great sheep flocks that provided manure as well as wool and meat, also helped to make large-scale agriculture profitable. The lord could still make profits, but there were ways in which the lessee could increase these. His administrative overheads were much less, for he had neither to maintain a large administrative machine nor a far-flung estate. It is significant that when one person is found leasing several demesnes, as with John Stannford, they are all concentrated in one small part of the county. Because he could maintain a close eye on his lands he was probably able to do without a reeve, or at least he could keep a much closer eye on any officials than had the monastic administrators in their audits. He was able to escape the great and expensive burden of 'paper-work' which the old system had imposed. Moreover, leasing provided opportunities for investment in agriculture at a time when agriculture remained a major source of profit, and when the instinct to acquire land remained unabated. The culmination of mercantile dreams was to establish their families as country gentlemen

who were no longer required to work in trade or industry.⁹⁵ This brings us to the incalculable social returns of leasing. It provided opportunities for the large-scale, if temporary, acquisition of land at a time when land was of considerable importance for social status. When Thomas Horton leased Westwood was he really concerned with the financial returns of this small manor, or did its attractions lie in being, in effect, a manorial lord?

VI

The leasing of the demesnes was producing a group of men who were cultivating on a scale far beyond that of the customary peasant farmers. But this development must not be seen in a vacuum. For at the same time, a similar development was taking place among the customary tenants of the chalkland manors. Here was emerging a group of men who cultivated two or more of the customary virgates. This can be seen particularly clearly at Durrington where an exceptionally good series of rentals survive. In the fourteenth century each of the seventeen virgates was usually held by a separate tenant, although in 1388 one tenant held two virgates. But by 1441 there were four men who each held two virgates, while by 1506, three men each held two virgates and another two each held three virgates.⁹⁶ By the latter date therefore, seventeen such holdings had been divided up among only ten men. The five men who now only held one virgate could no longer be described as among the leading farmers of the village. The large and growing scale of chalkland agriculture linked the leasing of the demesnes and the growing stratification among the customary tenancies. Thus John Martyn, a Durrington butcher and member of a prominent leasing family, was also one of

⁹³ Hare, *op cit*, pp 135-6.

⁹⁴ See *supra* note 10 and Hare, *op cit*, Ch III.

⁹⁵ A familiar story, exemplified in Wiltshire at a slightly later date in the career of William Stumpe. (Carus-Wilson, *loc cit*, pp 146-7).

⁹⁶ Although many of the Durrington rentals are undated they may be closely dated on internal evidence. The rental for 1505/6 is WCM: 5606 A^a.

the leading customary tenants in Durrington. In 1505/06 he held three virgates there while a John Martyn jun held another two virgates. Both these developments helped to characterize the chalklands in the sixteenth century as an area of large-scale capital-intensive agriculture.⁹⁷ This was reflected in the 1524 taxation returns which showed a concentration of wealthier taxpayers in this region and particularly in the area of the Marlborough downs.⁹⁸

The economic prosperity of the lessees and of these new greater tenants was also leading in the chalklands to social change and to a development that was to prove so significant in the later evolution of Wiltshire agriculture. This was the rise of the gentleman farmer, 'a man of education and leisure, who might take part in the government of a borough or serve as a steward to some great landowner', and a type who was to be so characteristic of the farming of the sheep and corn parts of the county in the succeeding centuries.⁹⁹ For although our lessees were rarely described as gentlemen, they probably already merited such a description. Their activities and horizons had already spread far beyond the agriculture and life of their village. We find them with influential and time-consuming tasks as baronial or royal officials. They could be active in the law. They could be concerned to provide a formal education for their children, so that we find representatives from several leasing families among the Wiltshire

entrants to Winchester College and New College, Oxford.¹⁰⁰ They mixed with families who were clearly gentry ones. We cannot provide a clear picture of the activities and social milieu of such families, but the scraps of evidence which we possess suggest that there was a substantial group of lessees who can more appropriately be described as gentleman-farmers than as peasants. But such gentleman-farmers were not just the product of the leasing of the demesnes, for they also resulted from general changes within the rural population: from the growing stratification of the tenant population and from the declining social distinctions between free, customary and leasehold tenures.

Any conclusions must therefore be rather ambiguous, reflecting both the importance of the local peasant families and the richer, large-scale farmers whose interests and activities had spread far beyond a single village. Some of the latter were men who had risen from among the village tenantry, but others were wealthy outsiders. But this study should also point to the need for further work elsewhere. In particular, we need more studies that are not restricted to individual estates; that take into account the possibility of one man leasing several demesnes and that explore the relationship of the lessees to the changes in rural society, both those among the group later known as the gentry and those among the peasantry. Ultimately, only further studies will do justice to the diversity of the demesne lessees. It was a diversity which aptly reflected the many forces that were moulding and transforming the society of later medieval England.

⁹⁷ E Kerridge, 'Agriculture 1500-1793' in *VCH* IV, 1959, pp. 57-8, 64.

⁹⁸ Based on the maps in, J Sheail, *The Regional Distribution of Wealth in England as indicated by the 1524-5 lay Subsidy Returns* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1968), pp 345 ff.

⁹⁹ Kerridge, loc cit, p. 64 (the quotation is his).

¹⁰⁰ I am very grateful to Professor G Lytle for providing me with a list of the Wiltshire entrants to these colleges.

The Regional Uniqueness of English Field Systems? Some Evidence from Eastern Norfolk

By B M S CAMPBELL

THE assumption that England possessed a number of regionally distinct field systems, differentiated from one another by certain unique attributes, has been implicit in much writing on English field systems. Yet in the present state of knowledge, with the full geographical extent and precise mode of operation of the common-field system imperfectly known, the possibility remains that the different systems which existed transcended regional boundaries and thus were not exclusively regional in character. Local and regional idiosyncracies of terminology and tenure certainly existed, but by themselves these do not constitute evidence of unique local or regional field systems. In fact, an examination of field systems on strictly functional grounds may well demonstrate the contrary, as in the case of Kent, where A R H Baker has shown that there was little peculiarly Kentish about the 'so-called "Kentish system"'.¹

This issue of the regional uniqueness, or otherwise, of English field systems is not only important in its own right but also bears upon our understanding of the origin and development of the common-field system. Any explanation of the origin of the system must account for the fact that field systems became co-ordinated and systematized in different ways, and to a different extent in different parts of the country. As yet no convincing reasons for this have been advanced. H L Gray

thought that spatial variations in field systems could be attributed to colonization by different ethnic groups but this view has now been largely discredited.² Even Joan Thirsk's more recent hypothesis, that regional variations in field systems reflect regional variations in population density, in the relative importance of pastoral and arable farming, and in soil and terrain, leaves certain facts unexplained.³ There are several exceptions to her observations that 'the classic common-field system represented an intensive system of farming for corn that was characteristic of all well-populated villages in plains and valleys in all parts of the kingdom', and that 'field-systems and the rigour of their rules and regulations varied according to the type of farming practised, and perhaps according to the size of populations'.⁴ Conspicuous exceptions are the greater part of East Anglia and the extreme south-east of England. Any further advance in our understanding of the genesis of the common-field system in England will therefore partly depend upon a fuller knowledge of the distribution, mode of operation, and course of development of each of its variant forms.

Among the most interesting areas for the study of field systems are areas which were characterized by intensive arable farming and

¹ A R H Baker, 'Some Fields and Farms in Medieval Kent', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, LXXX, 1965, pp 152-74; B M S Campbell, 'Commonfield Origins: The Regional Dimension', in T Rowley (ed), *The Origins of Open Field Agriculture* (forthcoming).

² H L Gray, *English Field Systems*, Cambridge, Mass, 1915. See also A R H Baker, 'Howard Levi Gray and English Field Systems: An Evaluation', *Agricultural History*, 39, 2, 1965, pp 86-91.

³ J Thirsk, 'The Common Fields', *Past & Present*, 29, 1964, pp 3-25; J Thirsk, 'The Origin of the Common Fields', *Past & Present*, 33, 1966, pp 142-7; J Thirsk, 'Preface to the Third Edition', pp v-xv in C S and C S Orwin, *The Open Fields*, Oxford, 3rd edn, 1967.

⁴ *Ibid*, p xi.

high population densities. In such areas subdivided fields were often especially well developed and the problems of reconciling the mutually dependent but conflicting demands of pastoral and arable husbandry were particularly acute. One such area was East Anglia. During the middle ages parts of this large and diverse region (notably eastern and south-eastern Norfolk) supported higher densities of population, and were characterized by higher levels of assessed lay wealth and more intensive methods of farming than any other part of the country.⁵ At present, however, specific knowledge of the field systems which operated in East Anglia is confined to western Norfolk and adjacent portions of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, away from the most economically advanced localities.⁶ Moreover, the excellence of sixteenth and seventeenth century sources has attracted attention away from earlier periods so that even in western Norfolk little is known of field systems before the major agrarian changes of the later middle ages. It therefore remains to be proven that the field system which is known to have existed in western Norfolk in the post-medieval period had at one time prevailed

throughout East Anglia. Since this system possessed certain highly individual characteristics this consideration is of some importance to the wider issue of regional uniqueness.

The individuality of field systems in western Norfolk largely derived from a unique fusion of the two opposing elements of flexibility and control; rights of common grazing, on the aftermath of the harvest (harvest shack) and on strips lying fallow throughout the year, applied to fields characterized by the utmost irregularity of layout and holdings which employed a highly flexible system of cropping. The irregularity of field layout and flexibility of cropping posed no great obstacle to the institution of harvest shack but presented serious problems to common grazing of the arable at other times of the year. These problems were resolved by means of an institution known as the foldcourse. Foldcourses comprised two essential elements; on the one hand the imposition of irregular cropping shifts to rationalize the distribution of unsown strips (including the provision of compensation for cultivators disadvantaged by possessing a disproportionate amount of land in the fallow shift), and on the other, the supervised grazing of communal flocks upon the fallow. Difficulties of access to the fallow strips and of control and manoeuvrability of livestock meant that rights of fallow grazing were confined to sheep. Accordingly, as soon as spring lambing was past, sheep were collected into communal flocks which were fed upon the heaths and sheepwalks by day and folded upon the fallow arable by night, whose soil they tathed with their treading, dung and urine. Within the commonfields the sheep were controlled by means of moveable folds, which permitted the grazing of relatively small blocks of fallow and also facilitated a more systematic pattern of grazing and dunging than would otherwise have occurred. In fact, the fertilization of the arable appears to have been the principal objective of the system, for the tathe of the sheep fold seems to have been of greater benefit to the arable fields than was

⁵ For the distribution of population and wealth in medieval England see the maps in H C Darby (ed), *A New Historical Geography of England*, Cambridge, 1973, pp 46, 139, 191. For East Anglian agriculture see B M S Campbell, 'Field Systems in Eastern Norfolk during the Middle Ages: A Study with Particular Reference to the Demographic and Agrarian Changes of the Fourteenth Century' (University of Cambridge, unpublished PhD thesis, 1975), pp 83-95, 105-17, 337-54.

⁶ Studies which have concentrated upon the field systems of this area are Gray, *op cit*, pp 305-54; J Saltmarsh and H C Darby, 'The Infield-Outfield System on a Norfolk Manor', *Econ Hist Rev*, III, 1935, pp 30-44; K J Allison, 'The Sheep-Corn Husbandry of Norfolk in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Ag Hist Rev*, V, 1, 1957, pp 12-30; M R Postgate, 'The Field Systems of Breckland', *Ag Hist Rev*, X, 2, 1962, pp 80-101; M R Postgate, 'The Open Fields of Cambridgeshire' (University of Cambridge, unpublished PhD thesis, 1964); M Spufford, 'A Cambridgeshire Community, Chippenham from Settlement to Enclosure', *Occasional Paper, Dept of English Local Hist, Univ of Leics*, XX, 1965. For the most recent account of East Anglian field systems see M R Postgate, 'Field Systems of East Anglia', being Chapter 7 in A R H Baker and R A Butlin (eds), *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles*, Cambridge, 1973.

the meagre pasturage available on the fallow to the sheep.

The use of sheep as walking dung machines, to transfer nutrients from the permanent pasture (which remained an essential adjunct to the system) to the arable, was a principle common to most areas of sheep-corn husbandry, but only in East Anglia does it appear to have been codified and integrated into the common-field system.⁷ Even more unusual is the fact that responsibility for this component of the field system was vested in the manorial lord rather than the corporate authority of the entire commonfield community (especially as in East Anglia there was generally a total lack of coincidence between manor and vill). In common-field villages elsewhere all rights of common grazing belonged to all the cultivators. It may be that in East Anglia the irregularity of holding layout and flexibility of cropping arrangements were such that the organization of fallow grazing demanded the superior authority of the manorial lord, but the subordinate position in which this placed the majority of cultivators was a potential weakness of the system. An unscrupulous lord could fold his tenants' sheep on the demesne to the neglect of their own land, thereby appropriating dung to his own use: or, if he was more interested in his wool clip than his corn yields, he could overstock the fields and pastures and expand his own flock at the expense of his tenants'.⁸ Ultimately, abuses such as these brought the system into disrepute and led to its decline and dissolution. This, however, was a development of the post-medieval period. What follows is an attempt to reconstruct field arrangements in

the more fertile and thickly settled locality of eastern Norfolk at their medieval zenith.

I

In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries manorial records show that extensive common fields dominated the landscape of eastern Norfolk, and that the subdivision of land was intense. Two and a half centuries later, by which time the common fields had already been much modified by consolidation and enclosure, the first topographical descriptions of entire townships become available and it is possible to assess the relative disposition of arable and pasture and reconstruct the original cadastra of the commonfields. This evidence shows that the ratio of pasture to arable was generally low, significantly lower than in western Norfolk, although subject to wide variation from township to township according to prevailing soil conditions. It also shows that, as was usual in East Anglia, the layout of the commonfields was highly irregular.⁹

The first of these points requires little elaboration. Eastern Norfolk was a closely-settled locality and arable land was consequently at a premium with the result that common pastures tended to remain only where soils were too light or poorly drained for cultivation. Given the uneven distribution of such soils some townships (particularly those in the vicinity of the Broadland marshes and the sandy heaths to the north of Norwich) were quite generously endowed whereas others, often in close proximity,

⁷ E Kerridge, 'The Sheepfold in Wiltshire and the Floating of the Water Meadows', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, VI, 1954, pp 282-9; J Thirsk (ed), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, IV, Cambridge, 1967, pp 33, 51, 56, 70, 92, 136, 188, 250; E Kerridge, *The Farmers of Old England*, 1973, pp 20-1, 77-84.

⁸ For examples see K J Allison, 'The Lost Villages of Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeology*, XXXI, 1957, pp 116-62; K J Allison, 'Flock Management in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, XI, 1958, pp 98-112.

⁹ The maps and surveys upon which these and the following observations are based include those of Westwick (1547), Norfolk Record Office (hereafter NRO) Pet MS 584; Cawston (c1580), NRO NRS 21404 A; Coltishall (1584), King's College, Cambridge (hereafter KCC) E 28; Hempstead with Lessingham (1584), KCC P 34; Blofield (1586), NRO NRS 16646 37 G; Horstead-with-Stanninghall (1586), KCC N 52; Horsford (1613), NRO Aylsham Collection 54; Worstead (undated 17th century), NRO Church Commissioners' Map 11905. For a fuller discussion see B M S Campbell, 'The Extent and Layout of Common-fields in Eastern Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeology* (forthcoming).

were not. At Horsford, Hevingham and Cawston, for instance, the open fields formed large but isolated islands of arable in a sea of pasture, whereas the converse applied on the rich loams of Flegg and adjacent areas, where the arable fields frequently stretched without interruption from township to township. At Coltishall, according to a survey of 1584, the common fields merged across the parish boundary with those of each of the neighbouring townships of Belaugh, Tunstead, Sco Ruston, and Hautbois and common pasture consisted of a mere 80 acres out of a total acreage of 1190. As will be seen later, the near elimination of common pasture in many townships in eastern Norfolk had important implications for the numbers of livestock that were kept and, more especially, for methods of feeding them.

As variable as the distribution of pasture and arable, in fact possibly even more so, was the internal layout of the common-fields. Confronted with this topographical complexity many sixteenth-century surveyors resorted to the purely descriptive device of dividing townships into a number of sectors or precincts, each of which was further subdivided into a number of quarantines or furlongs, the constituent strips of which were then itemized. The divisions which they adopted were usually determined by physical features such as roads, streams, field boundaries, and the orientation of strips, and their descriptions therefore tend to reflect the peculiar topography of each parish. Thus at Coltishall there were nine precincts, ranging in size from $43\frac{1}{2}$ acres to $248\frac{3}{8}$ acres, while at Lessingham a contemporary survey describes only four precincts although, as at Coltishall, they show a complete lack of uniformity in size.¹⁰ This variation in the number and size of the precincts described by the surveyors, as of the other units which they employed, illustrates the all-pervading irregularity which characterized the number and size of common-fields in this locality. Such field

names as are given relate to indeterminate areas, and it is plain that, with the exception of the strip, none of the areal units described possessed more than topographical significance. The individual strip was the fundamental unit of cultivation and to gauge a reliable impression of the original size and number of the strips, before they were affected by consolidation and enclosure, it is necessary to turn to earlier sources of evidence.

By the first half of the fourteenth century land holdings in eastern Norfolk were both attenuated in size and fragmented in layout. Statistics derived from data relating to a single manor almost certainly understate holding size but nevertheless convey the distinct impression that the majority of peasant holdings were extremely small. On the Prior of Norwich's manor at Martham, for example, an extent of 1292 shows mean holding size to have been as low as $2\frac{1}{4}$ acres (and it probably declined further during the next fifty years), whilst of 2122 arable strips 94 per cent were smaller than 1 acre, 66 per cent were smaller than $\frac{1}{2}$ acre and 16 per cent were smaller than $\frac{1}{4}$ acre.¹¹ Evidence from other manors in this locality reveals conditions which were much the same. At Coltishall mean holding size, as indicated by the obituaries of 400 deceased tenants recorded in the court rolls between 1280 and 1400, was less than 3 acres, whilst of 900 land parcels transacted in the court rolls between 1275 and 1349, 91 per cent were smaller than 1 acre, 69 per cent were smaller than $\frac{1}{2}$ acre, and 32 per cent were smaller than $\frac{1}{4}$ acre.¹² At Hevingham similar evidence reveals an almost identical state of affairs at the close of the thirteenth century, with few holdings larger than 3 acres and 86 per cent of land parcels smaller than 1 acre.¹³ Moreover, as the

¹¹ BM: Stowe MS 936.

¹² KCC: E 29-38.

¹³ NRO: NRS 14761 29 D 4, NRS 14634 29 D 2, NRS 14473 29 C 1. Similar conditions prevailed at Lessingham (BM: Add MS 24,316, ff 51-6), Worstead (NRO: Dean and Chapter Muniments, Register V, ff 132-5), Hautbois (PRO: SC 11 Roll 475), Burgh (PRO: SC 12 Portf 22 no 10), Hemsby (NRO: Middleton, Killin and Bruce,

¹⁰ For a detailed analysis of field layout at Coltishall see Campbell, *op cit*, 1975, pp 147-55.

detailed extent of Martham confirms, these holdings were not only diminutive in size but were also highly irregular in layout, a characteristic which was exacerbated by the combined action of an active peasant land market and, on most manors, a custom of partible inheritance. Such small and irregular holdings were fundamental to the way in which these extensive, minutely subdivided arable fields were worked, promoting the adoption of certain common rights but inhibiting the development of others. Of the former the most fundamental was arguably the right of shack feed on the aftermath of the harvest.

Harvest shack was a practical, common-sense response to the opportunities for pasturing livestock on the aftermath of the harvest where permanent pasture was scarce and arable fields were subdivided. It therefore tended to be found wherever holdings were heavily fragmented and strips were small, as was indeed the case in eastern Norfolk. At Horstead-with-Stanninghall an enclosure award of 1599 records the dissolution of 'libertie of shack in the tyme of shackle', and passing reference is made to either *shack* or *tempore aperte* at Antingham, Bassingham, Cawston, Lessingham, Martham, North Walsham, and South Walsham.¹⁴ At Gimingham there is reference to 'the shack tyme of winter' whilst at Catton and Hellesdon rights of common pasture applied to the arable fields *a tempore quo blada in eisdem terris crescentia leventur et adventet usque ad tempus quod dicte terre reseminantur*.¹⁵ Explicit testimony of the duration of this right is, however, available only for three townships in this locality; at Postwick and Reedham rights of common

pasturage applied to the arable fields for a period of six months (1 August — 2 February and 29 September — 25 March respectively), whilst at Ingham this period was slightly longer, lasting for seven months from 29 September to 3 May.¹⁶ On the other hand, once grass and plant growth ceased in mid-November the forage available on the arable became so meagre as to be virtually valueless. This no doubt underlies the fact that villein tenants were obliged to pay *bossagium* and *faldagium* and place their sheep in the lord's fold only up until 10 November, and extra cowherds and shepherds employed on the demesnes to supervise the stubble grazing of livestock were rarely retained for more than three months in the autumn. At Martham, for instance, in 1380 two shepherds were employed during the last three weeks in September whilst the harvest was being gathered in, of whom one was retained for a further ten weeks until the middle of December, when he too was laid off.¹⁷

But just as the fragmentation of holdings encouraged the institution of harvest shack so it also hindered the institution of collective grazing rights at other times of the year. An essential precondition for common grazing of the fallow was the segregation of sown from unsown strips. In western Norfolk in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this was achieved by the imposition of a system of irregular cropping shifts, but in this case neither the subdivision of fields nor the complexity of holding layout was as great as in eastern Norfolk in the middle ages. Where holdings were so small, so fragmented, and so irregular, and moreover subject to constant change, the problems presented to the operation of even the most ingenious communal rotational scheme would have been virtually insurmountable. These problems were further compounded by the complexity and intensity of cropping practices in this area.

19.11.68), and Thurne (W Hudson, 'The Abbot of St. Benet and his Tenants after the Peasant Revolt of 1381', *Antiquary*, 29, 1894, p 256).

¹⁴KCC: N 10; Walter Rye, *Some Rough Materials for a History of the Hundred of North Erpingham in the County of Norfolk*, I, Norwich, 1883, pp 14, 28; NRO: NRS 21404 A, NNAS 5930 20 D 4; PRO: DL 44/295, E 142 no. 83(4); KCC: P 34.

¹⁵PRO: DL 44/295; NRO: Dean and Chapter Muniments, Register I, ff 252 and 254v.

¹⁶PRO: C134 File 104 (1) and File 95 (14); C135 File 74 (8).

¹⁷NRO: NNAS 5896 20 D 1.

Detailed evidence of rotations, and thus the incidence of fallowing, is available only for demesnes (most of which comprised at least some open-field land) and may be deceptive as the tiny holdings of the peasantry were probably cultivated with greater intensity. Even so, by the second half of the fourteenth century, when most account rolls begin to record the area of fallow on a regular basis, no demesne in this locality was fallowing land more frequently than once every five or six years, and several were fallowing it as infrequently as once a decade (see Table 1). Furthermore, fallowing had been even less frequent during the first half of the fourteenth century when 'high-farming' was at its peak, often less than once every twelve years. There were even occasions on some demesnes when fallows were dispensed with altogether and the entire arable area brought into cultivation, although this policy was rarely pursued for more than two or three years in succession. Notwithstanding the intensity of cropping which was the consequence of this near elimination of fallows, none of these demesnes appears to have suffered from a deterioration of productivity.¹⁸ Far from it, most of them sustained a level of output per acre which was exceptional by the standards of the day. Wheat, for instance, the most demanding cereal crop, yielded an average of 15 bushels per acre on almost all demesnes in eastern Norfolk, and on the most productive, such as the neighbouring demesnes of Martham and Hemsby (both of which belonged to Norwich Cathedral Priory), averaged well over 20 bushels, and rose to over 30 bushels in a good year. Barley, the principal grain grown in this area, yielded at a broadly similar if somewhat lower rate, yields of 25 bushels being by no means unknown.

This seeming paradox, of the near elimination of fallows coupled with a high and sustained level of productivity, was the product of a progressive and carefully

TABLE 1
Proportion of total arable annually fallowed on various demesnes in eastern Norfolk, 1269–1428

Demesne	Time-span (years)	Number of A/C Rolls	% total arable area fallowed		
			min	mean	max
<i>Pre-1350</i>					
Halvergate	1268–74	4	0	0	0
Flegg	1340–41	1		0	
Heigham By Norwich	1302–06	2	2.5	3.15	3.8
Acle	1268–80	7	1.3	5.2	11.4
South Walsham	1270–97	9	0	6.8	13.4
Martham	1294–1350	19	0	8.1	25.3
Hemsby	1294–1342	13	1.8	9.4	14.2
Suffield	1272–1300	9	2.1	11.7	21.2
Hanworth	1272–1306	19	0	12.4	25.5
Knapton	1345–48	2	19.15	20.3	21.5
<i>Post-1350</i>					
North Walsham	1367–1427	5	3.7	7.8	9.9
Potter Heigham	1389–90	1		9.4	
Thwaite	c1386–87	1		10.4	
Scottow	c1364–65	1		10.6	
Ashby	1378–92	2	11.1	13.15	15.2
Flegg	1351–1428	14	0	13.3	25.2
Ludham	c1354–55	1		13.3	
Martham	1355–1420	19	2.9	13.4	27.9
Hoveton	1392–1422	2	10.8	13.55	16.3
Heigham By Norwich	1380–81	1		15.9	
Plumstead	1359–1420	15	11.0	16.0	27.7
Hevingham	1357–58	1		17.3	
Shotesham	1352–53 or 1368–69	1		17.8	

Figures in italics are estimates.

Sources: PRO SC 6/929/1–7, SC 6/936/2–8 and 18–32, SC 6/937/1–10, SC 6/944/1–9 and 23–31; NRO Dean and Chapter Muniments MS 4652–65, 4945–64, 5127–43; NRO Diocesan Est/2, 9, 11, 12; NRO Church Commissioners' 101426 2/13 and 11/13; NRO NNAS 5892–5903 20 D 1, NNAS 5904–16 20 D 2; NRO NRS 13996 28 F 3; Windsor, St George's Chapel XV 53 98–9.

¹⁸ For a converse situation on less intensively cultivated demesnes see J Z Titow, *Winchester Yields: A Study in Medieval Agricultural Productivity*, Cambridge, 1972.

balanced system of husbandry. This is illustrated by the pains that were taken to conserve and improve soil fertility. Animal manure, for example, the prime source of fertilizer, was put to maximum use by being carefully collected and then systematically spread upon the land and ploughed in, an operation which was essential if losses from the twin processes of leaching and oxidization were to be kept to a minimum. So great was this concern to make maximum use of available supplies of livestock manure that some demesnes in the vicinity of the Broadland marshes even went to the length of gathering up the manure from the sheep and cattle pens on the marshes and transporting it back to the demesnes to be spread on the fields. Elsewhere supplies of farmyard manure were supplemented by marl, or even, in one instance, night soil purchased from Norwich, and the whole procedure was reinforced by repeated ploughings which stirred up the nutrients within the soil and improved its texture. As well as these direct measures of improving fertility an important part was also played by the choice of crops and the way in which they were rotated with one-another. Thus, a pronounced emphasis upon spring-sown crops — barley, oats and legumes — ensured that about two-thirds of the arable was annually fallowed on a half-yearly basis, whilst the cultivation of legumes on a large scale both restored the nitrogen content of the soil and supplied valuable fodder to the livestock, whose manure was returned to the soil.¹⁹ Also, since crop rotations were themselves extremely flexible, allowance could readily be made for local and annual variations in soil conditions. In fact, the only purpose for which the occasional bare fallow appears to have been retained was to cleanse the land of weed growth, a function for which the employment of heavy seeding rates

and use of oats as a smother crop were but partial substitutes.²⁰

If it is assumed that the peasantry cultivated their small holdings at least as intensively as the manorial lords cultivated their demesnes, then, with less than 10 per cent of all common-field strips lying fallow each year, the difficulties of instituting a system of common rotation would have been as great as its desirability would have been small. In other words, under this system of cultivation the amount of land available for temporary pasturage would have been too meagre to have merited the concessions and compromises involved in arranging for it to be grazed in common. Indeed, by interfering with a highly flexible and effective system of cropping such an action might even have been counter-productive. The weight of circumstantial evidence, therefore, suggests that rights of common grazing did not apply to fallow strips in these common fields. The sole exception to this rule appears to have been the township of Little Plumstead, located on the edge of Mousehold Heath just five miles north-east of Norwich, where there is a solitary reference in an *Inquisition Post Mortem* to fallow arable remaining subject to rights of common pasturage for the whole year.²¹ Elsewhere, however, cultivators made their own arrangements for grazing fallow strips, probably using a system of tethering, just as they enjoyed complete freedom in matters of cultivation. Only in shack time, after the harvest, were the arable fields grazed in common.

It follows from the conclusion that fallow strips were grazed in severalty rather than in common that rights of foldcourse, as they were known in western Norfolk, did not apply to these common fields. This is borne out by a limited amount of direct evidence.

¹⁹ Legumes accounted for between a fifth and a seventh of a sown area.

²⁰ Fallow land was generally ploughed at least four, and occasionally as many as six times before being returned to cultivation. The most common seeding rates were 4 bushels per acre for wheat and legumes, 6 bushels per acre for barley and 8 bushels per acre for oats.

²¹ PRO: C135 File 64 (2).

For instance, on several manors, as at Blickling in 1410–11, tenants paid to have their land tathed by the lord's fold, a transaction which would not have been necessary if the manorial flock was entitled to common grazing on the fallow.²² So highly valued was the tathe of the fold — it was valued at 2s per acre at Antingham and 2s 6d per acre at both Blickling and Saxthorpe — that it was evidently reserved to the exclusive use of the demesne. This is specified as having been the case at Gimingham and Hevingham, an account roll of the former referring to *agistamento de xiiij^{xx} bidentes de collecto in falda domini per messorum pro dominica terra compostand hoc anno* (the term *bidentes de collecto* probably refers to the cullet sheep which villein and other tenants were obliged to place in the lord's custody).²³ That sheep folds and flocks were confined to the demesnes is also implicit in certain more general statements. At Horstead-and-Stanninghall the fellows of King's College, Cambridge were entitled, as lords of the manor, to 'feede and depasture their sheepe in and uppon the . . . Commons and heathe ground and in and upon the . . . inclossuer called the hundred Acres and upon other demesnes of the said Manor wth libertie of shackle for the same sheepe yeerlie in shackle tyme', and at Catton there was 'A Foldcourse for 300 sheep being only on the Shack of the Lands belonging to the sd. manor'.²⁴

Whilst reinforcing the impression that there was no attempt to co-ordinate the distribution of fallow strips and subject them to rights of foldcourse or any other collective grazing right, these references nonetheless testify to seigneurial intervention in certain aspects of animal husbandry. In particular, manorial lords enjoyed certain privileges with regard to sheep folding. On many manors, such as Gimingham and Hevingham, the lord was entitled to the tathe of his customary tenants' sheep, a right which is specified in a number of manorial extents. Thus, at Heigham-by-Norwich in 1275 it was recorded of Simon Bele, villein, that *debet habere omnes bidentes suas in falda domini a Pentecosta usque ad festum Sancti Martini*.²⁵ In addition, at Horstead-and-Stanninghall and Catton, as also at Gimingham and Hevingham and several other townships, the manorial lord was entitled to feed his flock upon the common pastures and upon the common fields in shack time after the harvest. Such rights went by the collective name of 'liberty of the fold' (*libertatibus faldagii*) and in this form are recorded on many, although not all, manors in the area.²⁶ Nevertheless, there is nothing to suggest that manorial lords enjoyed superior rights of pasturage over their tenants' land when it lay fallow: in this respect there was a fundamental difference between 'liberty of the fold' and the right of foldcourse.

This fundamental difference between the right of foldcourse and its diminutive, 'liberty of the fold', reflected the varying importance of sheep rearing within the rural economy. In sandy western Norfolk sheep rearing was at least as important as the grain production with which it was so closely integrated, and

²² *Et de vijs. vjd. receptis de diversis hominibus pro iij acris terre cum falda domini compostand hoc anno pro acra ijs. vjd.* (NRO: NRS 10196 25 A 1). Similar payments are recorded at Antingham (NRO: MS 6031 16 B 8) and Saxthorpe (NRO: 19677 42 E 3).

²³ NRO: MS 6001 16 A 6. The entry relating to Hevingham is much the same (NRO: NRS 14747 29 D 4). Other references to 'cullet sheep' occur at Ashby (NRO Diocesan Est/9) and Martham (NRO: NNAS 5900 20 D 1). See also N Davis, 'Sheep Farming Terms in Medieval Norfolk', *Notes & Queries*, 16, 1969, pp 404–5, and Allison, op cit, 1957, p 21.

²⁴ KCC: N 10; NRO Dean and Chapter Muniments MS 2669. Also an inquisition on behalf of the Abbot of St. Benet at Holme found that he had *faldam . . . in solo ipsius Abbatis apud Antyngham* (NRO NRS 3102 13 B 2) whilst at South Walsham Lady Margery Folyet possessed *cursus unius falde tempore aperto* (PRO: E 142 no 83(4)).

²⁵ NRO: Diocesan Est/2 (2/2). An almost identical arrangement prevailed at Taverham (BM: Stowe MS 936, f 30).

²⁶ Rye, op cit, pp 16, 27, 37, 77; NRO: Dean and Chapter Muniments, Leases 1st Ledger Book, f 128. References to 'foldcourses' at Cawston (NRO MS 12538 30 D 5), Roughton (Rye, op cit, pp 165–7) and Westwick (NRO Pet MS 584/2/16) are to sheep-walks 'where never plough or fould for tashing doth com' (BM: Add MS 27403, cited in Postgate, op cit, 1973, p 317).

most manors carried large flocks, but in eastern Norfolk, where soils were heavier and more fertile, corn production was pre-eminent and sheep rearing was relegated to a much less prominent position.²⁷

Demesne flocks, according to manorial stock accounts, were generally either small or non-existent. This is partially explained by the fact that on large estates, such as those of Norwich Cathedral Priory and St Benet's Abbey, it was the practice to manage flocks on an inter-manorial basis and account for them separately. In 1343, for instance, St Benet's Abbey had 1900 sheep on the marshes attached to its granges of Hoveton, Ashmanhaugh, Worstead, Barton, Hardele and Kybald, whilst in 1420/21 a flock of 610 was inter-manorial between the three lay manors of Blickling, Gunton and Erpingham.²⁸ However, sheep rearing on this scale was possible only in the immediate vicinity of extensive marshes and heaths, and consequently on most manors the virtual absence of sheep from the stock account is probably a genuine indication of the unimportance of sheep in the rural economy. When this was the case, manorial lords appear to have relied upon their tenants' sheep to fold the demesnes, although to judge from the areas folded each year even these sheep were few in number. Folding was generally unrelenting from Lamas-tide until Martinmas (3 May — 10 November), a period of twenty-seven weeks,²⁹ yet on no demesne for which account rolls survive did the area folded ever exceed 35 acres, which implies that flocks

rarely comprised more than 200 animals.³⁰ At Martham, one of the most productive demesnes in eastern Norfolk, situated in the immediate vicinity of extensive marshland pastures, the acreage folded averaged only twenty-four acres between 1363 and 1400, whilst at Plumstead, a manor with an even more favourable location, it averaged twenty-six acres and never exceeded thirty-two acres.³¹ These were both intensively cultivated demesnes and it is possible that the smallness of the area available for folding rather than the small size of sheep flocks underlies these low figures, but, on the other hand, there is nothing to suggest that these demesnes failed to take up their full option on their customary tenants' sheep. On the contrary, there are cases in the court rolls of Martham of tenants who were prosecuted for evading their obligation to place their sheep in the lord's fold and at Plumstead the tathe of the fold was supplemented with additional manure bought in from outside.³² On other demesnes the area folded was frequently smaller still, as at Flegg where it averaged only nine acres between 1355 and 1427, and there were some demesnes, such as Suffield, where folding does not appear to have taken place at all.³³ In the few rare instances when the number of cullet sheep is recorded the small size of these flocks is confirmed. At Gimingham the number of cullet sheep folding the demesne ranged from 143 in 1358/59 to 280 in 1367/68, but was generally below 200 in number.³⁴ With flocks of this size it is no surprise to find that the acreages folded were never large and that the tathe of

²⁷ At Sedgeford in north-western Norfolk — Norwich Cathedral Priory's principal sheep manor — the profits of the fold regularly yielded over £15 a year in the late thirteenth century, whereas at Taverham, close to Norwich and in the vicinity of extensive sandy heaths, they rarely yielded more than £5, and on the important corn manor of Plumstead, usually less than £1 (NRO: Dean and Chapter Muniments, *Proficuum Maneriorum*).

²⁸ NRO: Diocesan Est/2 (2/11), NRS 10535 25 B 5.

²⁹ This is the period most commonly specified in manorial extents during which tenants paid *faldagium* and were obliged to place their sheep in the lord's fold: NRO Diocesan Est/2 (2/2); PRO SC 11 Roll 471, DL 29 289/4747.

³⁰ 'A thousand sheep would fold an acre of common-field land in a night', Thirsk, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, p 188. Similarly, Kerridge has estimated that it took 200 sheep a week to tathe one statute acre (E Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution*, 1967, pp 74–5).

³¹ NRO: NNAS 5894–5903 20 D 1, NNAS 5904–05 20 D 2, Dean and Chapter Muniments MS 5127–38.

³² NRO: Dean and Chapter Muniments MS 4998–99.

³³ NRO: Diocesan Est/9; PRO SC 6/944/1–6.

³⁴ PRO: DL 29 288/4719–20; NRO: MS 6001 A 6, NRS 11331–32 26 B 6, NRS 11058–60 25 E 2, NRS 11069 25 E 3.

the fold was jealously reserved to the demesne.

Under these circumstances manorial lords therefore had neither the need nor the desire to annex their tenants' land as well as their sheep and 'liberty of the fold' remained a right by which dung was appropriated to the demesne.³⁵ Indeed, several references in extents and account rolls imply quite strongly that villein tenants alone paid *faldagium* and were subject to the lord's liberty of the fold.³⁵ It would thus appear that this right was less an instrument of common-field management than of seigneurial exploitation and, as such, cannot be classed as part of the field system of this area. In fact, 'liberty of the fold' detracted from, rather than contributed to, the operation of these common fields. The right of the lord's flock to harvest shack meant that he had a vested interest in preventing enclosure and gave him the power to obstruct it, whilst his own right to the tathe of his customary tenants' sheep reduced the productivity of their land. However, these were essentially indirect influences upon the operation of these common fields; they did not seriously alter the pattern of remarkable freedom from all but the most fundamental common rules and regulations.

II

As the foregoing discussion has revealed, eastern Norfolk's common fields were more remarkable for their extent and degree of subdivision than for any superimposed field organization. By the close of the thirteenth century the only concession which appears to have been made to the fragmentation and intermixture of holdings was the institution of common grazing rights on the aftermath of the harvest. With this exception, their form found little expression in their function. As these common fields were so singularly lacking in system, therefore, it follows that

there could have been little that was peculiarly East Anglian about them; not even, in a negative sense, the absence of so many of the rules and regulations usually associated with common-field systems (for which Kentish field systems provide a direct parallel).³⁶ Some individuality certainly derived from the lords' superior position in matters of sheep folding; this, too, was related to analagous rights elsewhere, both within and outside East Anglia, and was more a manifestation of seigneurial privilege than an essential and integral part of the field system.³⁷ Moreover, the lords' control over their tenants' sheep was not absolute: it was restricted to customary tenants. The area's substantial freeholding population remained exempt.³⁸ The latter, even more than the former, therefore, enjoyed almost complete autonomy in the management of their land, an autonomy which, if the husbandry of the demesnes is at all representative, they undoubtedly exploited to the full.

Such conclusions clearly have a number of wider implications at both a regional and a more general level, not least in the modification which they make to established models of East Anglian field systems. Much still remains to be known about the function of field systems elsewhere in East Anglia, but meanwhile the evidence of field systems in eastern Norfolk does at least demonstrate that the peculiar pastoral practices long deemed to have been the special hall-mark of this region

³⁵ BM: Stowe MS 936, f 30; NRO: Diocesan Est/2 (2/2) and (2/8); PRO: SC 11 Roll 471.

³⁶ Cambell, *op cit*, forthcoming, Baker, *op cit*, 1965. Also A R H Baker, 'Field Systems of Southeast England', in Baker and Butlin, *op cit*, pp 393-419. Subdivided fields devoid of common rules of cultivation and grazing have also been identified in the Lincolnshire fenland, see H E Hallam, *Settlement and Society: A Study of the Early Agrarian History of South Lincolnshire*, Cambridge, 1965, pp 137-61.

³⁷ H S Bennett, *Life on the English Manor*, Cambridge, 1937, p 77; P D A Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village: Cuxham, 1240-1400*, Oxford, 1965, p 62; M M Postan (ed), *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, I, *The Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 2nd edn, 1966, p 601.

³⁸ For the number and distribution of freemen see B Dodwell, 'The Free Peasantry of East Anglia in Domesday', *Norfolk Archaeology*, XXVII, 1939, pp 145-57; H C Darby, *The Domesday Geography of Eastern England*, Cambridge, 1952, pp 361-2.

were, in fact, absent from large parts of it. Indeed, when more is known about field systems in Suffolk and Essex (as yet a serious gap in our knowledge) it may even transpire that the sort of loosely controlled common-field system identified in eastern Norfolk was the predominant form of East Anglian field system.³⁹ On currently available evidence it does seem that foldcourses, and the cropping shifts which were such an essential part of them, were confined to areas where soils were light and readily exhausted, pastures were extensive, and sheep rearing was the predominant pastoral activity. The light sand and good sand regions of western Norfolk and north-western Suffolk fulfil these criteria and, for that matter, also provide abundant evidence of foldcourses; but this is less true of much else of East Anglia, particularly on the boulder clays of high Suffolk and south-central Norfolk. In these areas, although there may have been a seigneurial monopoly of sheep folds, the existence of foldcourses remains to be proven.

Nevertheless, although East Anglian field systems are now revealed as less uniform than has hitherto been supposed, the differences between them should not be exaggerated; certain characteristics were shared by all of them, including an irregularity of field layout, haphazard inter-mixture of holdings, flexibility of cropping practice, common grazing of the aftermath of the harvest, and, perhaps most significantly of all, a seigneurial monopoly of sheep folds. This last feature, contrary to earlier belief, was subject to considerable variation within the region and did not always play a direct role in the management of the common fields. Nonetheless, that seigneurial control of sheep folding prevailed in principle, even where foldcourses were non-existent, is important, for it suggests that the East Anglian foldcourse may indeed represent 'the survival and

special development of a seigneurial monopoly which was once widespread'.⁴⁰ In other words, what in eastern Norfolk remained a mere manorial imposition, in western Norfolk, under different physical and social circumstances, was transformed into an integral and essential part of the field system. Proof that the foldcourse system actually originated in this way has yet to be found and requires a careful examination of medieval rather than later evidence, but such an interpretation does render this institution somewhat more explicable, and could explain why the right of foldcourse inhered in the manorial lord and not in the whole common-field community. Moreover, if foldcourses were imposed from above rather than evolved from below, then their failure to develop beyond a rather rudimentary stage in eastern Norfolk, even where the necessary physical conditions prevailed (as in the vicinity of the Broadland marshes and sandy heaths to the north of Norwich), may have been as much a reflection of the weakness of the manorial nexus in this locality as of any fundamental difference of geographical environment.

Placed in perspective, therefore, the foldcourse system emerges, like the infield-outfield system of Breckland, as a sub-regional response to particular environmental and social conditions.⁴¹ As such it was uniquely East Anglian, but whether the same was true of field systems in the remainder of the region is another matter. Certainly, field systems in eastern Norfolk showed little essential difference from loosely organized field systems elsewhere. This point is important, for earlier writers, preoccupied with uniqueness, have tended to stress institutions such as the foldcourse and aspects of land tenure peculiar to this region and have played down the very real similarities which existed between these and other field systems. In this context there is a particularly close resem-

³⁹ For a case study of Suffolk field systems see D P Dymond, 'The Parish of Walsham-le-Willows: Two Elizabethan Surveys and their Medieval Background', *Proc of the Suffolk Inst of Archaeology*, XXXIII, 2, 1974, pp 195-211.

⁴⁰ A Simpson, 'The East Anglian Foldcourse; Some Queries', *Ag Hist Rev*, VI, 2, 1958, pp 87-96.

⁴¹ Postgate, *op cit*, 1962.

blance between the field systems of eastern Norfolk and those of northern Kent.

With the reservation that there is yet some doubt whether Kentish subdivided fields were ever grazed in common after the harvest, there is little in terms of system to distinguish them from the common fields of eastern Norfolk.⁴² In neither case did common rotations exist, and in neither case were fallow strips pastured in common, with the result that both field systems gave scope to almost unlimited individualism in matters of husbandry. Moreover, the freedom which individual land holders enjoyed in the cultivation of their land was paralleled by their freedom to divide their holdings between heirs and even dispose of land *inter vivos*. As a result small holdings predominated, population densities were exceptionally high, and husbandry tended to be both intensive and productive. Yet underlying the high level of economic development attained by both eastern Norfolk and northern Kent by the high middle ages, and the close affinity displayed by their field systems, were settlement histories which could scarcely have been more different. Northern Kent was settled relatively early by Romans and Jutes, whereas eastern Norfolk was settled relatively late by Angles, Frisians and Danes. Such contrasting settlement histories, and yet such similar field systems, conflict with the hypothesis that regional differences in field systems were the outcome of the introduction to this country of different common-field systems by colonists coming from different parts of the continent.⁴³ Ethnic differences may well have underlain many of the detailed variations in tenure and custom but they do not seem to have given rise to functionally distinct and regionally unique field systems.

Rather than supporting a theory of regional uniqueness and an ethnic origin of

field systems, the field systems of eastern Norfolk and northern Kent (with their intense subdivision of land and haphazard inter-mixture of holdings) accord better with a concept of gradual organic growth. In fact, both localities furnish examples of townships (Martham in Norfolk and Gillingham in Kent) in which subdivided fields have been shown to have evolved spontaneously during the early middle ages.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, although supporting a theory of gradual growth, the development of these field systems differed in one all-important respect from that postulated by Thirsk; neither in eastern Norfolk nor in northern Kent did it culminate in the regularization of holding layout and the co-ordination of farming practices. Yet, according to Thirsk:

'... as the parcels of each cultivator became more and more scattered, regulations had to be introduced to ensure that all had access to their own land and to water, and that meadows and ploughland were protected from damage by stock. The community was drawn together by sheer necessity to cooperate in the control of farming practices.'⁴⁵

Undoubtedly the systematization of field systems conferred many real advantages but, on the other hand, as the experience of eastern Norfolk clearly demonstrates, failure to systematize was not necessarily inimical to agriculture and may even have bestowed certain advantages of its own. Thus, in eastern Norfolk the absence of communal controls meant that cultivators were free to innovate and thereby raise the intensity and productivity of agriculture. By the early fourteenth century the standard of cultivation in these irregular common fields had attained an exceptionally high level. This would suggest that the intensification of agricultural method was an alternative response to the

⁴² See above, n 36.

⁴³ This was the interpretation put forward by H L Gray in 1915. See Baker, *op cit*, 'Howard Levi Gray and English Field Systems'.

⁴⁴ B M S Campbell, 'Population Change and the Genesis of Commonfields on a Norfolk Manor', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, XXXIII, 2, 1980, pp 174-92, A R H Baker, 'Open Fields and Partible Inheritance on a Kent Manor', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, XVII, 1964, pp 1-23.

⁴⁵ Thirsk, *op cit*, 1964, reprinted in R H Hilton (ed), *Peasants, Knights and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, 1976, p 16.

regularization of existing holdings and farming practice, as populations grew and land became more and more subdivided. These two responses were to a large extent mutually exclusive, for the methods of husbandry employed in eastern Norfolk by the early fourteenth century would have been incompatible with field systems which were any more closely controlled (ie which employed common rotations and enforced communal grazing of the fallow). It is also arguable that an absence of common rules left field systems more adaptable, better able to accommodate further increases in population.

The question thus arises, what caused some townships to regularize the layout of holdings and fields and adopt common rules of cultivation and grazing, and others not? Obviously there is no simple answer, but the experience of eastern Norfolk does suggest that one decisive factor may have been the balance of power between the manorial authorities and the peasant community. A conspicuous feature of East Anglian field systems is the part evidently played by the manorial lord in the institution of certain rights, notably the right of foldcourse, and in attempts, mostly abortive, to standardize the size of customary holdings.⁴⁶ The effective-

ness of the manorial lords in making any more radical changes was, however, severely curtailed by the weakness of the manorial nexus on the one hand, and the existence of a well developed peasant proprietorship on the other. In eastern Norfolk not only was there virtually no coincidence between manor and vill but the peasantry, many of whom were freemen and sokemen, were accustomed to divide, alienate, and cultivate their holdings as they pleased, and were patently unwilling to surrender any of these rights in favour of the introduction of a communal system of husbandry. So it would therefore seem that, far from having been evolved from below, the systematization of field systems was imposed from above; hence the generally close association between areas of strong manorialism and regular, highly systematized, field systems. How much more credible, therefore, is a theory which attributes the regularization of field systems, not to the corporate action of the peasant community, but to the intervention of some superior authority such as the manorial lord. The manorial lord is more likely than the peasant community to have been successful in reconciling the host of individual interests involved, and he possessed the authority to carry through and enforce the major reallocation of land which the regularization of holding and field layout would have required. It is to be hoped that further research into medieval field systems will cast additional light on this particular relationship.

⁴⁶ Manors where customary holdings had at one time been standardized include Martham (BM: Stowe MS 936), Lessingham (BM: Add MS 24, 316, ff 51-6), Cawston (PRO: SC 11 Roll 471), and Hevingham, Cricot Hall (NRO: NRS 19280 33 F 9).

Yeomen and Metalsmiths: Livestock in the Dual Economy in South Staffordshire 1560–1720¹

By PAULINE FROST

SOUTH Staffordshire has a long history of rural domestic industry, of intense specialization in the production of metal-ware, and of tiny individual enterprises. Coal was being mined from the Ten Yard Seam as early as 1273 and iron ore was extracted from at least 1291.² Nailers were first recorded at work in Dudley in 1425 and the trade soon spread to the countryside, where the small metal crafts reached their peak as a domestic industry in the seventeenth century. Between 1560 and 1720 no less than 20 per cent of all the workers in the region for whom probate inventories survive were metal craftsmen, two-thirds of them nailers.

The metal-smiths were not, at first, supported solely by their labours at the forge but practised a dual economy, combining nail, lock or spur-making with stock-rearing, gardening, and, occasionally, arable husbandry.³ This mixed economy persisted in residual form until a very late period. In 1837 about 10 per cent of families in industrial West Bromwich owned a pig or a cow, and pig-keeping in gardens or allotments was to be found in the Black Country well into the present century.⁴

The dual economy of agriculture and

domestic craftwork, which reached its apogee in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, has received considerable attention from scholars.⁵ Yet, despite Joan Thirsk's demonstration of a close relationship between rural industry and livestock rearing, little has been written specifically on this subject.⁶

Livestock ownership is one of the best indicators of regional economic and occupational contrasts in South Staffordshire between 1560 and 1720. Since many more craftsmen owned stock than held arable land, the study of livestock enterprises is essential to the clarification of structure of the dual economy. It is known that craftsmen often owned a cow or a pig; but how many animals did they actually own, which types of stock were preferred by yeomen and smiths, and to what degree did herd sizes and stock combinations vary from the farmers to the craftsmen? The present study investigates the metal-workers' livestock enterprises compared with those of the full-time farmer, attempts to clarify the symbiosis of farm and forge, and traces the changing economic fortunes of the metal-workers of south Staffordshire from the sixteenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth century.

¹ I am grateful to Dr S Robert Aiken and Dr D B Frost for their criticism and advice during the preparation of this paper.

² *Staffordshire Historical Collections*, 1911, pp 155–6.

³ Similar combinations of metalworking and agriculture were to be found around Sheffield at the same date. Cf D Hey, *The Rural Metalworkers of the Sheffield Region*, Leicester, 1972.

⁴ G J Barnsby, 'The standard of living in the Black Country in the Nineteenth Century', *EcHR* (2nd ser) XXIV, 1971, p 231.

⁵ For example J Birrell, 'Peasant Craftsmen in the Medieval Forest', *Ag Hist Rev* XVII, 1969, pp 91–107; Hey, *op cit*. The extractive industries are particularly well served: see, for example, C J Hunt, *The Leadminers of the Northern Pennines in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Manchester, 1970; I Blanchard, 'The Miner and the Agricultural Community in late Medieval England', *Ag Hist Rev* XX, 1972, pp 93–106.

⁶ J Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside', in F J Fisher (ed), *Essays in the Economic & Social History of Tudor and Stuart England*, Cambridge, 1961.

I

Probate inventories dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contain a wealth of information about the economic enterprises of individuals. In contrast to the glebe terriers and manorial surveys which refer primarily to tenurial matters and legal rights, the inventories provide quantitative information about farm and business operations. As a result they have been used in a number of detailed studies of regional agrarian systems.⁷ Except for Hey's work in south Yorkshire, however, they have been little used to elucidate the relationship between farming and crafts in the dual economy. Characteristically they contain very full listings of livestock, distinguishing different types of animals, numbers, ages, and estimated values, and this makes them particularly valuable for the present study. The inventories are not, however, without their drawbacks. Under-valuation of goods is thought to have been common, and, more seriously, they do not represent the whole range of society, being biased towards the middle stratum. The inventories of the aristocracy, gentry and of the very rich lie in the archives of the Archdiocese of Canterbury, and are not available for examination. On the other hand, the very poor were unlikely to make wills or to need inventories.

In the present work, which is based largely on the probate inventories, every one of the surviving inventories dated between 1560 and 1720 for south Staffordshire was included in the analysis. It therefore deals with a large section of the community, ranging from labourers to the lesser gentry and clergy.⁸ The husbandman, yeoman, and craftsman classes

are well recorded and, while the poorest classes are almost certainly under-represented, as many as 10 per cent of all the surviving inventories from the area are those of impoverished labourers. It was from this last class that the metal-smiths were most likely to be recruited. In the following section the physical setting of south Staffordshire is described and the distribution of agrarian systems and rural domestic industry outlined. Then the relative importance of livestock and arable farming in the area between 1560 and 1720 is assessed, and this is followed by a more detailed analysis of livestock ownership by farmers and metal-workers both in the later sixteenth century and at the end of the seventeenth century.

II

In Britain and Europe rural industry has traditionally been associated with upland stock-rearing regions, and the metal trades of south Staffordshire were no exception. Most recent writers have seen Staffordshire as an area transitional between fielden and highland agricultural systems, with the southern part of the county partaking of a 'wood-pasture' type of farming economy, this last term implying considerable variation in field systems and agricultural enterprises.⁹ Within this zone physical conditions vary considerably, there being a fundamental difference between the uplands of the south Staffordshire plateau and the lower lands to the east and west of it (Fig 1). The greater part of the plateau lies between 120 and 150 m. (400–500 feet), although its central ridge rises to 264 m (866 feet) south of Dudley. Flanking the ridge, but still above 120 m, are the middle (or productive) and upper coal measures. The soils of this upland area show no uniformity except in their general unsuitability for arable

⁷ J Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming*, 1957; J Yelling, *Common Field and Enclosure in England 1450–1850*, 1977.

⁸ All the inventories filed with the Consistory Court of The Diocese of Lichfield and those belonging to its Peculiar Jurisdictions are preserved in the Lichfield Joint Record Office (LJRO). There are inevitable gaps in the record, the most important being for Wolverhampton where the inventories predating 1700 have been removed in the past and can no longer be traced. Despite this, 1809 inventories suitable for analysis exist.

⁹ J Thirsk (ed), *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, IV, Cambridge, 1967, pp 99 *et seq*; B K Roberts, 'Field Systems in the West Midlands' in A R H Baker and R A Butlin, *Studies in Field Systems in the British Isles*, Cambridge, 1973, pp 188–231.

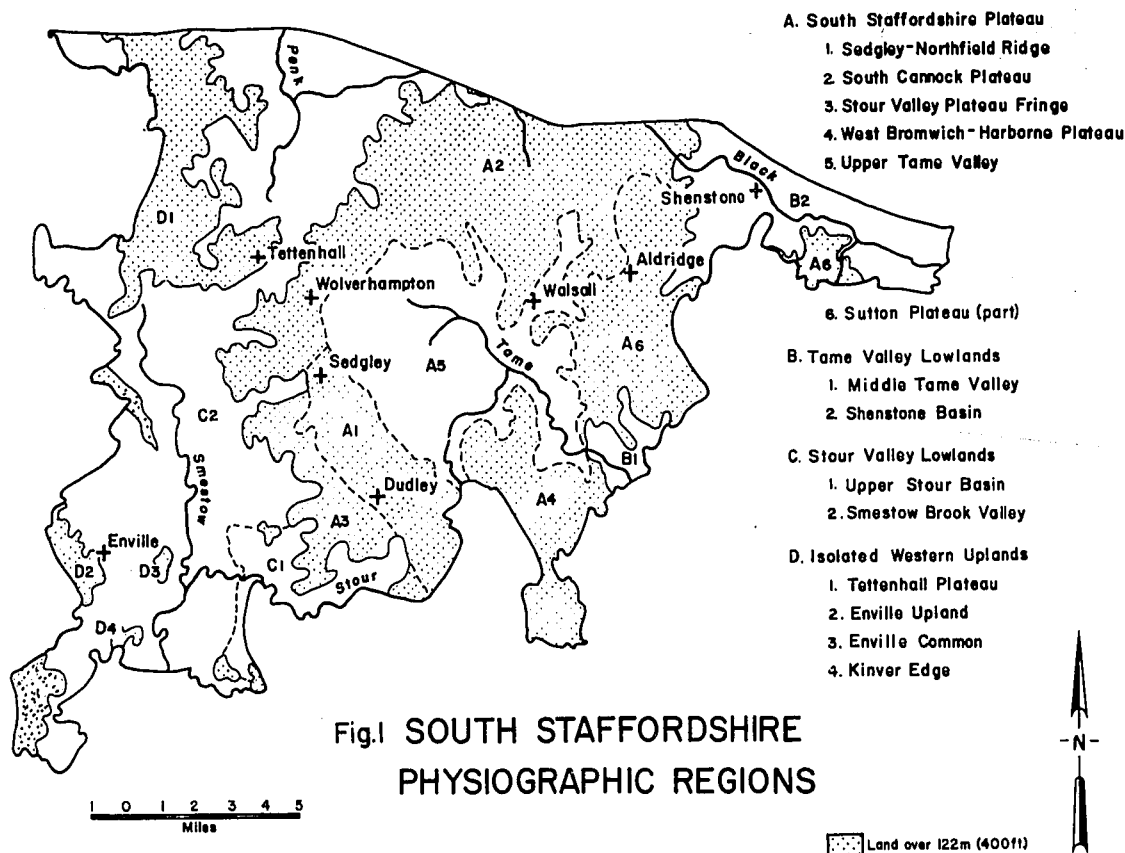


Fig.1 SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE
PHYSIOGRAPHIC REGIONS

farming, for they range from thin soils on the dolerite and limestone ridge and the pebbly, acid soils of West Bromwich Heath, to the stiff, tenacious, and often water-logged clays of the coal measures and glacial drifts.

The lowlands to the west and north-east of the plateau, on the other hand, have loam soils, which are easily worked, freely drained and responsive, and which comprise some of the best arable land in the county. They are to be found west of the plateau in a belt running from Pattingham to Kinver, and in the east in the Shenstone-Lichfield area, where today they are given over to market-gardening.

This physical dichotomy was reflected in the agrarian systems found in the region in the seventeenth century. Although Staffordshire lay outside the main champion region of the English midlands, regular three-field systems and mixed farming economies predominated in the lowlands of the southern part of the county, where the best arable soils occurred.

Even there, however, the common fields were a far less significant element in the agrarian landscape than, for example, in the champion region of Warwickshire.¹⁰ The farming systems of the plateau showed all the diversity to be expected in an upland area of mixed, and generally infertile soils. The number of common fields varied from two at West Bromwich to six at Sedgley, while some townships, such as Rowley Regis on the central ridge, lacked open arable completely.¹¹

¹⁰ Roberts, *op cit*, p 192, comments that the townships in the fielden areas of south Warwickshire might have as much as 70–80 per cent of their area in common arable. In south Staffordshire the proportion was much less. For example, in the lowland township of Perton and Trescott only 20–30 per cent of the total area was occupied by the common fields in the late sixteenth century. (Staffs RO: D593/J22/4).

¹¹ LJRO: probate inventory of Edward Grove of West Bromwich, 6 Jan 1669; Dudley Archives (DA) 7/9; 'Survey of the Manor of Rowley Regis, 1556', *Staffs, Hist Coll*, 1936. The names of closes here powerfully suggest the bleakness of the area: Bare Moor, The Heath, Hell Meadow, Caldmore, Windyhurst.

Communal arable fields in this area were much smaller in size than those of the lowlands, rarely exceeding fifty acres, and in the large parish of Sedgley only 11 per cent of the area was in open strips in 1613.¹² This was counter-balanced by the existence of extremely large wastes, which were for the most part unstinted, allowing the landless labourer to keep some animals to increase his income and to improve his family's diet. The abundance of common land permitted the practice of making temporary intakes from the waste to supplement the communal arable as well as the more usual form of encroachment by the taking in of closes of pasture to be held in severalty.¹³ Under such conditions it was not surprising that livestock rearing predominated over crop farming in the early modern period.

Within this agrarian milieu rural industry experienced a rapid expansion from the mid-sixteenth century, but this growth was largely confined to the plateau. Two major influences helped to create this pattern. Domestic industry is labour-intensive and a large supply of cheap labour is one of the essentials for its growth.¹⁴ Joan Thirsk has stressed the fact that the upland, stock-rearing districts of England suffered from a considerable degree of concealed under-employment in the seventeenth century and that alternatives to agricultural work were welcomed.¹⁵ In south Staffordshire the large, open wastes attracted landless families from surrounding fielden counties who joined the potential industrial labour force.¹⁶ The very real need for subsidiary employment explains the rapidity with which nailing and the other

metal trades spread throughout the coalfield and plateau area in the later sixteenth century, after Birmingham began to specialize in the more lucrative finishing trades and brass-founding. Not only were labour conditions ideal in this area but the raw materials to sustain the metal trades were at hand. Coals for the smith's hearth were readily and cheaply available from surface workings, many of them on the common; while bar iron and nail rod were produced in forges and slitting mills on the periphery of the plateau.

Compared with conditions on the south Staffordshire plateau the lowlands had better soils and a more balanced mixed farming economy. The commons were smaller and were more likely to be closed to squatters, with the result that population growth was largely internal and comparatively slow. Although some of the region's blast furnaces and finery forges were located in these areas fuel was always a problem, and although these parishes were within easy reach of the middlemen from Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Dudley domestic metal-working industries failed to develop in them.

III

The relative importance of arable crops and livestock in south Staffordshire in the early modern period may be gauged by a comparison of the value of livestock recorded in the inventories with the total value of crops and stock. Table 1 shows that in the late sixteenth century there was a marked emphasis on livestock production in south Staffordshire as a whole, livestock contributing no less than 78.6 per cent of the total value of farm products.¹⁷ The contrast in animal production between the plateau and the lowlands was only incipient at this period, but was later to emerge more clearly. By the end of the next century the plateau had stock values above the regional average with

¹² DA 7/9.

¹³ These topics are dealt with in more detail in P Frost, 'The Growth & Localisation of Rural Industry in South Staffordshire, 1560-1720', unpublished PhD thesis, Birmingham University, 1973, Ch 4, 5.

¹⁴ H Kellenbenz, 'Les industries rurales en Occident de la fin du Moyen Age au XVIII siècle', *Annales ESC*, XVIII, 1963, pp 833-83; D M Smith, 'The British Hosiery Industry in the mid-nineteenth century', *Trans IBG*, XXXIII, 1963, pp 125-42.

¹⁵ Thirsk, 1961, op cit.

¹⁶ Frost, op cit, Ch 8.

¹⁷ In order to minimize inaccuracies only inventories for the harvest months in August, September and October have been used.

TABLE 1
South Staffordshire
Stock value as percentage of total stock and crop value

Time period occupational group	Coalfield parishes		(Harvest months) Lowland parishes		Whole area	
	%	No of inventories	%	No of inventories	%	No of inventories
<i>1560-1600</i>						
Farmers*	78.1	4	76.8	1	77.9	5
Metal-workers†	71.8	3	—	0	71.8	3
All occupations	79.1	33	77.9	16	78.6	49
<i>1601-40</i>						
Farmers	67.7	18	60.1	14	63.6	32
Metal-workers	77.1	9	—	0	77.1	9
All occupations	70.3	57	62.2	29	66.3	86
<i>1641-80</i>						
Farmers	59.1	24	59.9	14	59.5	38
Metal-workers	56.4	26	—	1	56.5	27
All occupations	57.5	73	59.9	21	58.5	94
<i>1681-1720</i>						
Farmers	59.0	32	54.5	13	57.7	45
Metal-workers	62.9	36	45.2	5	59.6	41
All occupations	60.3	125	54.0	29	58.8	153

* All those designated yeoman or husbandman in the inventories.

† Metal-workers, by far the largest and most representative group of industrial craftsmen in the Black Country, were taken as a sample of all the craftsmen in the area.

Source: Lichfield Joint RO — Probate Inventories (Consistory Court and Peculiar Jurisdictions).

livestock contributing more than 60 per cent of farm production values compared with 54 per cent in the lowlands. Over the entire period, however, the whole of south Staffordshire showed a distinct decline in the relative importance of livestock in the farm economy, the overall percentage value falling to 58.8 per cent in 1681-1720.

A similar trend was apparent to the east of Birmingham in the northern part of the Forest of Arden and has been attributed by Skipp to the greatly increased number of poor, landless families and a growing demand for cheap food.¹⁸ Many of the changes that

Skipp notes in Solihull and Yardley in the early seventeenth century are paralleled in the Black Country.

Winter corn, which made up over 55 per cent of all the grain grown on the plateau between 1560 and 1600, fell to 35 per cent of the total between 1601 and 1640 and to a mere 24 per cent between 1641 and 1680.¹⁹ It was replaced by spring-sown barley and oats, for these grains, being cheaper, were more in demand among the poor. Convertible husbandry, which increased overall grain production, was also making strides in south Staffordshire. Temporary leys or 'leasows'

¹⁸ V Skipp, *Crisis and Development: an ecological case study of the Forest of Arden, 1570-1674*, Cambridge, 1978.

¹⁹ LJRO probate inventories.

began to appear in the communal open fields of Wolverhampton as early as 1580 and references to them became more frequent throughout the area in the early seventeenth century.²⁰ This was accompanied by the consolidation and enclosure of open field holdings.²¹

The evidence for a change from the raising of beef cattle to dairying is less well attested in south Staffordshire than in Arden. The first mention of a 'dayry hous' in the inventories occurs in 1639, considerably later than those mentioned by Skipp.²² Nonetheless some substantial yeomen were taking advantage of improved markets for dairy products by maintaining herds of milking cows. For example, Thomas Baylies of Darlaston had in 1615 nineteen cows, two weanling calves, six yearlings, and one two-year-old heifer, as well as a bull. He also had butter and cheese in store worth £8 13s 4d.²³ These changes in agricultural production were undoubtedly encouraged by the increasing number of landless labourers and craftsmen on the plateau and by the growth of the urban market in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Walsall, and Dudley.

It might be argued that up to 1650 the relative decline in the importance of livestock was more apparent than real, as corn prices were rising more quickly than livestock prices. However, the onset of the depression in the arable sector soon after mid-century meant that livestock prices rose faster than those for corn. Despite this, the contribution made by livestock to the total value of farm production in south Staffordshire continued to decline and this is further evidence for increased demand for bread corn among the urban and industrial population. Table 1

shows that the greatest advance in arable crops occurred in the areas with good loam soils, that is to say, in the western lowland parishes and in Shenstone.

As the seventeenth century drew on, an increasing proportion of people owned no livestock at all. For example, only 10 per cent of the inventories mentioned no cattle in 1560–1600, but 41 per cent were cattleless in 1680–1720. At the same time the average size of herds was decreasing, and this despite rising prices for livestock products. This suggests that many people kept cattle for subsistence rather than commercial purposes and, as a result, they did not respond to a rising market. On the contrary, their economic toehold in livestock raising was becoming more precarious. Obviously significant economic and social changes were occurring, but did they affect the whole area and the whole community equally, or were the economies of farmers and metal-workers diverging?

IV

In the later sixteenth century the metal-workers comprised only a very small minority of the rural population of south Staffordshire, but subsequent recruitment to their ranks from the agricultural community was to be very rapid, and they were already concentrated on the plateau. It is interesting therefore to examine in more detail the regional and occupational variations in livestock ownership already existing at that early date (Table 2). There is no doubt that the dominant agricultural enterprise in the region between 1560 and 1600 was cattle rearing, for 90 per cent of the inventories surviving from that period record some cattle. Compared with other cattle-raising areas of England, however, south Staffordshire was a region of small herds, with a median herd size of only six despite the existence of large commons. In the fenlands of Holland in Lincolnshire the median herd size at this time

²⁰ Humphrey Perrye had 'one leasowe called Thornes Hayes of four acres in Horsley Field', in Wolverhampton in 1580. Staffs RO: D593/J/22/6.

²¹ The evidence for this, drawn from the glebe terriers and other parochial records and the Dudley Archives, is fully discussed in Frost, *op cit*, pp 157–73.

²² LJRO prob inv. Francis Tomkyson, Wednesbury 1639 (Consistory Court).

²³ *Ibid* prob inv. Thomas Baylies, Darlaston, 1615.

TABLE 2
Numbers of persons owning stock at death, 1560–1720

Period	Total no of inventories	Inventories with animals		Inventories without animals	
Stock type		no	%	no	%
<i>1560–1600</i>	250				
Cattle		224	89.6	26	10.4
Sheep		186	74.4	64	25.6
Swine		167	66.8	83	33.2
Horses		165	66.0	85	34.0
Oxen		96	38.5	154	61.5
<i>1601–40</i>	419				
Cattle		301	74.2	108	25.8
Sheep		270	64.4	149	35.6
Swine		215	51.3	204	48.7
Horses		244	58.2	175	41.8
Oxen		76	18.1	343	81.9
<i>1641–80</i>	348				
Cattle		248	71.3	100	28.7
Sheep		176	50.6	172	49.4
Swine		184	52.9	164	47.1
Horses		286	53.4	162	46.6
Oxen		41	11.8	307	88.2
<i>1681–1720</i>	790				
Cattle		463	58.6	327	41.4
Sheep		240	31.3	550	68.7
Swine		344	42.3	456	55.7
Horses		342	43.3	448	56.7
Oxen		26	3.3	764	96.7

Source: Lichfield Joint RO — Probate Inventories (Consistory Court and Peculiar Jurisdictions).

was ten, and even in the predominantly sheep-rearing Lincolnshire Wolds nine was normal.²⁴

The herds of Arnold Okell of Tipton and George Symcocks of West Bromwich in 1580, numbered at thirty-five and thirty-four respectively, were unusually large for south Staffordshire.²⁵ Both men appear to have been cattle breeders and graziers, with cattle pastured in closes taken out of the heaths.

Okell had eleven one-year-old cattle, eleven two-year-olds and seven three-year-olds pastured at Rowley Regis, while Symcocks sold the cattle bred on his farm to neighbours for fattening or directly to the butcher. The grazing of fat-stock was carried on by most of the larger farmers, some of whom appear to have supplemented their herds with store cattle bought from Welsh drovers *en route* to London.²⁶ One farm inventory, dated 1591, had no breeding stock but listed 'xiiij fattening

²⁴ J Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming*, 1957, pp 70, 87.

²⁵ LJRO prob inv. Arnold Okell, Tipton, August 1581 (Peculiar Juris); prob inv George Symcocks, West Bromwich, December 1577 (Consistory Court).

²⁶ W J Boyd, 'Staffordshire suits in the court of Star Chamber, temp Hen VII and Hen VIII', *SHC* ns X, 1907, p 104.

kine'.²⁷ There is no suggestion that special-purpose dairy herds were kept. Milch cows were rarely mentioned specifically, and most inventories record butter and cheese in quantities sufficient for only one household.

Regional differences within south Staffordshire were as yet little defined, the median herd size being similar throughout the area. A slightly greater range of cattle ownership seems to have been found, however, on the plateau compared with the lowlands. The former had slightly higher proportions of people with six cows or more (51.5 per cent as opposed to 49.4 per cent) and of those with no cattle at all (12.3 per cent compared with 8.9 per cent). Moreover, of the metal craftsmen, who were mainly found on the plateau, only 5.9 per cent were entirely cattleless. These facts suggest that the coalfield parishes of the Plateau already had a slightly wider range of economic classes than those of the lowlands, and also that the metal-smiths were on average better off than many of the poorer husbandmen and agricultural labourers. It was this last class, landless and cattleless, that was to turn increasingly to industrial employment as a means of ameliorating its economic situation.

Sheep, in general, took second place to cattle in the sixteenth century, with 74.4 per cent of inventories mentioning them. Forty-two per cent of the inventories record flocks of more than twenty, but, compared with the moorland sheep runs of the Pennines in the north of the county, flocks were small with a median size of only twenty-seven.²⁸ Between 1560 and 1600 only nineteen persons (7.4 per cent) are recorded as having flocks of 100 or more, the largest flock being owned by William Wyrley, Esq of Handsworth, who

possessed 500 sheep at his death.²⁹ The importance of sheep varied regionally within the area, for on the light soils and heaths of the lowlands 80 per cent of the inventories record some sheep, compared with only 71.7 per cent on the plateau, and their median flock sizes were forty and twenty respectively.

Sheep played a much less important part in the farming enterprises of the metal-smiths than did cattle. Forty per cent of the metal-workers were totally lacking in sheep, compared with only 24 per cent of the purely farming community. On the plateau the median flock size of the metal-workers who did own sheep was only fifteen, compared with forty-four for farmers. There is a strong possibility that the smiths were not representative of the rural craftsmen as a whole, as it is likely that those potential industrial workers who owned sheep turned to carding, spinning or weaving rather than nail-making. The textile industries, however, played a very minor role in south Staffordshire throughout its history.³⁰

As far as the number of inventories mentioning them is concerned, swine were the third most important animal kept in late sixteenth-century south Staffordshire, but numerically they fall very far short of cattle and sheep. About one-third of the inventories record none, and only 15.6 per cent had more than five. The largest herd on record was fourteen and, with an overall median herd size of only three it seems clear that pig-rearing was carried on in very small units. Farmers kept rather more in the lowland region than on the plateau, but there is no evidence of large-scale swine-rearing, even in the former Forest of Kinver.

After cattle, pigs were the most important animal in the economy of the domestic craftsman. Over 83 per cent of the craftsmen had at

²⁷ LJRO prob inv. Henry Partriche, West Bromwich, 1591 (Consistory Court).

²⁸ In the sixteenth century the median flock sizes in Lincolnshire were as follows: Fenland twenty, Marshland forty, Wolds thirty-four, Claylands twenty-six. (Thirsk, 1957, op cit, pp 34, 72, 87, 106.) In Leicestershire in 1588 the median was thirty.

²⁹ LJRO prob inv. Wm Wyrley, Handsworth, Mar 1562 (Consistory Court).

³⁰ Frost, op cit, pp 578-9. For example, the Sedgley parish registers between 1578 and 1600 record five weavers compared with 229 nailers, and the Wednesbury registers of 1681 to 1706 have only five weavers but 106 nailers and sixty-one colliers.

least one pig, compared with a figure of only 66.8 per cent for all occupations, although few craftsmen had more than five pigs. Both the coalfield area and the metal-craftsmen as a group characteristically had smaller numbers of pigs per owner compared with the lowland and the farming community, the median number owned being two and four respectively. Pig-keeping was traditionally associated with industry in the Black Country and the swine were fed on kitchen scraps and scavenged on the waste.

Even at this date the ownership of horses was more widespread than that of oxen, with two-thirds of the recorded individuals possessing at least one horse and only 38 per cent having any oxen. This fact, and the regional and occupational variations in horse and ox ownership, reflect the different functions of the two animals. The horse, with its greater speed and handiness and above all, its versatility, was used for ploughing, carting and other farm activities: but it could also be found powering gins to raise coal or water, and in pack trains carrying coals, iron, provisions, and other commodities, as well as employed as a riding animal. In contrast, the use of the ox was almost wholly confined to ploughing, harrowing and the like.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the farming community was more likely to own oxen than the craftsmen. Forty-six per cent of farmers owned at least one, and 31 per cent had more than five, the median number being six. Only the full-time farmer with a large area of arable would find it necessary to keep a whole team, and the greater extent of arable land and the higher proportion of substantial farmers to be found in the lowlands were reflected in a higher level of ox ownership there. In the inventories 63.2 per cent of recorded persons owned oxen in the lowlands, compared with only 25.2 per cent on the plateau. On the heavy soils of the upper coal measures, on the other hand, ox teams tended to be larger than in the lowlands, the median number being six as opposed to four on the light soils, the larger

team being a response to the greater difficulty of ploughing on the clays.

Very few craftsmen owned oxen in the sixteenth century; only 5.5 per cent had any at all, and only one had more than two. As oxen were kept mainly for ploughing this tends to confirm that few craftsmen had large arable holdings, and that the men who adopted nail-making and similar trades were drawn from the class of small husbandmen, herdsmen and labourers who depended on livestock for their livelihood. The number of craftsmen who owned horses, on the other hand, was very high, for at least two-thirds of the industrial community had at least one and some had as many as five. This compares interestingly with the overall level of horse ownership on the plateau of just below 60 per cent, and implies that the man with industrial interests in that area was rather more likely than average to own a horse. The horse was invaluable in the mining and iron-working region for the transport of coal, ironstone, charcoal, and finished products, and it was very much to the smith's advantage to keep at least one nag so that he could obtain raw materials and maintain links outside his immediate neighbourhood.

Despite the importance of the horse in the developing industries of the plateau, regionally speaking the individual level of horse ownership was higher in the lowlands, where 78 per cent of recorded persons owned horses at their death in contrast with not quite 60 per cent in the uplands. This probably reflects the greater rural prosperity of the lowlands, where any substantial yeomen owned both an ox team and horses, whereas the farming community of the plateau had more of the poorer husbandmen who could not afford either and who were likely candidates for entry into the growing ranks of the part-time smiths.

The rural craftsman at the end of the sixteenth century, therefore, still had strong links with the agrarian economy. The small area of open-field arable, which even then was being reduced by enclosure, must have meant

that a large proportion of families in south Staffordshire had little or no arable land, and depended largely upon stock rearing. The stock value percentages show this to have been the case, and this situation became steadily more common as the population increased. Of the poorer, landless families, it seems that many took up subsidiary crafts, particularly nail-making and other small metal manufactures, to supplement their income sufficiently to buy corn. Figures from the probate inventories show that the metal-workers generally had some stock, but not enough to make a living from stock rearing or grazing alone. Before 1600 the average metal-worker, with five or six cows and a few sheep in a close attached to his cottage, or grazing on the waste, and two pigs foraging for food, must never have lacked the staples of country life — milk, cheese and bacon. His trade provided him with cash to buy bread and other necessities and he was probably prosperous enough to own a horse. At this point in the history of Staffordshire the financial situation of the craftsman must have been a happy one compared with the landless labourer who had no subsidiary trade. At this period, too, the symbiotic relationship between agriculture and industry had not broken down and few craftsmen relied solely on nail-making for a living. Thereby they avoided the worst effects of the constant downward pressure upon wages which was to depress the living standards of craftsmen in the following century.

V

During the seventeenth century the number and importance of the metal-craftsmen in south Staffordshire increased very greatly, until in 1641–80 they almost equalled the farming group and comprised almost one-third of the recorded population.³¹ At the same time, far-reaching changes which were

almost certainly related to the increasing emphasis on rural industry, were taking place in the pattern of livestock rearing, and indeed in agriculture as a whole in south Staffordshire.

One of the more important trends was that a relatively smaller proportion of families had any cattle, the percentage of cattleless inventories rising sharply from 25.8 per cent in 1601–40 to 41.4 per cent in the period 1681–1720. Concomitant with this was a drop in the proportion of inventories with more than five cattle, from 30.8 per cent to 23.2 per cent, the median herd size dropping from five to four. Elsewhere in the country the reverse was true. The depression affecting arable farming following 1650 led to a rise in stock prices relative to prices for corn, and an increase in the number of animals kept. The experience of both Lincolnshire and Kent was that many more cattle were kept in all areas except the sheep-rearing regions of the marshes and the Kentish Downs.³² This also seems to have been the pattern in the non-industrial parts of Staffordshire.

Within south Staffordshire it was the coal-field and plateau area which was most affected by the drop in the number of cattle owners, for the proportion of cattleless men there rose from 24.7 per cent to 43.7 per cent between 1601 and 1720, compared with a change from 28.2 per cent to 34.3 per cent in the lowlands. By 1720 the median herd size on the plateau was only half that of the lowlands. These figures strongly suggest that, within the region where rural industry was important, industry and agriculture were becoming separated from each other as ways of life.

Staffordshire cattle were mainly of the black, long-horned breed of the Pennine counties, good milkers and draught animals which also fattened well.³³ The main stock rearing enterprise in south Staffordshire in the seventeenth century continued to be the

³¹ Ibid, p 239.

³² Thirsk, 1957, op cit, pp 139, 153, 175, 189; C W Chalklin, *Seventeenth Century Kent*, 1965, p 96.

³³ J Thirsk, 'Horn & Thorn in Staffordshire', *N Staffs, Jnl of Fld Studies* IX, 1969, p 4.

breeding and fattening of cattle. Occasionally, inventories contain a breakdown of cattle by age, which gives a picture of the herd of the farmer who bred his own cattle. For example, in 1676 John Mitchell of Lower Penn owned seven cows, six calves, four one-year-old beasts, two twinter or two year-old heifers, one bull and two three-year-old heifers.³⁴ The lack of specific mention of young beasts over the age of three years, not all of which could have been added to existing herds, suggests that cattle were raised to the age of three years and then sold to the butcher or to neighbouring farmers for fattening. Winter crops of pulses were grown locally for fattening cattle. In 1796 cattle bred in Staffordshire were being fattened near London for the metropolitan market.³⁵ In the seventeenth century those who did not breed their own store-cattle often bought them for fattening, an enterprise which many craftsmen went in for because of the ease with which it could be combined with industrial work. Thomas Parkhouse of Wednesbury, a potter who died in 1630, possessed two calves 'att the stake bought for to reare'.³⁶

Dairying was locally important, but always subsidiary to the raising of fat-stock. Large amounts of cheese are recorded in many inventories, and it may have been produced in marketable amounts, although only for local markets. The same was true of butter and certainly, in the eighteenth century, Wednesbury became well-known as a market for this commodity. Even in the later seventeenth century some metal-workers maintained themselves at a reasonable level of prosperity by practising a combination of farming and industry. Such a case was the nailer of Birchills in Walsall parish who owned four cows and had 'two hundred of cheese' in store, worth £2.³⁷ The first specific

mention of a 'dayry hous' occurs in the inventories in 1639, and of a cheese chamber of storing cheeses in 1663, both in the houses of substantial yeomen.³⁸

South Staffordshire had never been an important sheepkeeping region, and throughout the seventeenth century, sheep continually declined in importance. By 1720 only 31.3 per cent of the inventories recorded any sheep and the median flock size fell by half, from twenty-seven in 1560–1600 to fourteen in 1681–1720. The coalfield area was most affected by this change, and sheep, having been second only to cattle in the later sixteenth century as far as numbers of owners were concerned, fell to the lowest place, after swine and horses, in 1681–1720. For the craftsman, the cash income from wool was less important for feeding his family than the dairy products that a cow gave him. The decline of sheepkeeping was also marked on the sandy lowland soils, though not to the extent that it was on the plateau. It is remarkable that the decline of sheep-rearing in south Staffordshire coincided with a rising sheep population on the neighbouring Triassic sandstones of east Worcestershire.³⁹

Pigs replaced sheep as the most favoured animal after cattle. In common with most other types of stock, the proportion of owners among the population dropped throughout the seventeenth century, but not nearly to the extent that characterized other stock, including cattle. The number of pig owners over the whole area dropped by a mere 9 per cent between 1601 and 1720, while the numbers of cattle owners fell by 15.6 per cent. The pig is a poor man's animal and obviously, with the increasing proportion of paupers in the community, it held its own better than the more expensive and time-consuming animals. The ease of keeping pigs also made it ideal for the part-time farmer

³⁴ LJRO prob inv. John Mitchell, Lower Penn, April 1676 (Consistory Court).

³⁵ W Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Staffordshire*, 1796, pp 148–9.

³⁶ LJRO prob inv. Thomas Parkhouse, Wednesbury, May 1630 (Consistory Court).

³⁷ Ibid, Thomas Whitehouse, Birchills, Walsall, 1698.

³⁸ Ibid, Francis Tomkyson, Wednesbury, 1639; Nicholas Ward, Aldridge, 1663.

³⁹ J. Yelling, 'Probate inventories and the Geography of Livestock Farming, a study of East Worcestershire, 1540–1750', *Trans IBC LI*, 1970, p 122.

who was tending to spend more of his time at the forge.

Proportionally, there were fewer ox and horse owners in south Staffordshire at the end of the seventeenth century than at the beginning. The decline in ox ownership was extreme, falling from 38.4 per cent of the recorded population in 1560–1600 to only 3.4 per cent in 1681–1720, a drop of 92.1 per cent. It is obvious that, by the early years of the eighteenth century the ox was rapidly disappearing from the scene. It was no wonder that horses were bred throughout south Staffordshire and Cannock Chase and that the horse fair at Brewood became nationally famous.

At the beginning of the century, of the metal-working group, 77.7 per cent had some cattle, 59.7 per cent had sheep and 44.7 per cent owned pigs. These figures are somewhat lower than those for the farmers' group, but they show that very few craftsmen were entirely dependent on industrial income in the early years of the century. Throughout the next hundred years, the proportions of craftsmen with stock dropped steadily and at much faster rates than for farmers, so that by 1681–1720 54.9 per cent of metal-workers had some cattle, only 25.5 per cent had sheep, and 32.5 per cent possessed pigs. It can be seen that pig ownership declined least, largely because of the animal's suitability for integration into an increasingly industrial milieu.

VI

The mixed farming economy of south Staffordshire had been dominated, throughout the medieval period, by stock rearing. The present work shows that in the sixteenth century, cattle breeding and fattening was the major enterprise of the region, rather than the specialized and time-consuming enterprise of dairying which was beginning to rise in importance in the north-west of the county. Arable farming was at this time much less important than stock farming. It is

particularly noticeable that the relatively small group of metal-workers recorded in the probate inventories before 1600 included proportionally more cattle owners than average, for 94 per cent owned at least one cow. This evidence supports Dr Thirsk's contention that stock-rearing consumed relatively little of the farmer's time and that individuals relying mainly on stock had more opportunities to take up by employments than had arable farmers. At this period the movement of capital into the iron industry and the increasing demand for metal wares both at home and abroad made the metal crafts attractive to those wishing to supplement their incomes and increasing numbers of people must have seized this opportunity.

It is clear that as yet few craftsmen depended wholly upon industrial earnings and most practised a dual economy, owning a small forge, some livestock, and, occasionally, a few acres of arable land too. The average size of the metal-workers' herds was, however, smaller than that of the full-time farmer. The importance of farming to the whole community can be seen in that even the urban bit-and-stirrup makers of Walsall, who owned no arable land themselves, traditionally ceased work at harvest-time in order to hire themselves out to farmers as agricultural labour.⁴⁰

In the seventeenth century all the evidence points towards a rapid and continuing decline in the relative importance of livestock farming in south Staffordshire, even after 1650 when an upward trend in stock-rearing could be discerned in many of the other parts of the country. In Staffordshire the relative value of stock production compared with that of crops, as revealed by the inventories, was declining, and the proportion of families owning stock was also, apparently, going down. It is likely that several factors were involved in this trend, including the adoption of convertible husbandry and the shrinking of

⁴⁰ S A H Burne, 'Staffordshire Quarter Sessions Rolls, IV, 1598–1603' *Staffs Hist Coll*, 1935.

the commons, but one fact that is particularly significant is that, proportionally, the metal-workers were suffering most from the decline. This suggests that agricultural and industrial occupations were becoming increasingly divorced from each other and a vista of increasing dependence on a cash income from forge products was opening up. An invidious result of this trend was an increasing helplessness in the face of falling piecework rates for metal products, and this in turn helped to depress the metal-workers from a state of relative security at the beginning of the sixteenth century to the depths of poverty

and squalor that so struck Engels in the 1830s and 1840s.⁴¹

The rise of rural domestic industry has been widely studied but the process of its decline has often been neglected, except in the most general of terms. It would be interesting to compare the changing standards of living of domestic craftsmen during the eighteenth century in areas which were becoming urbanized like the Black Country and those which remained almost wholly rural.

⁴¹ F Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, 1846, trans W O Henderson and W H Chaloner, Oxford, 1958.

Notes and Comments

WINTER CONFERENCE, 1980

The Winter Conference was held on Saturday 6 December at the Polytechnic of Central London on the theme 'The Dissemination of Agricultural Knowledge'. As in previous years the conference was shared with the Historical Geography Research Group of the Institute of British Geographers. The trend of recent years towards larger numbers was continued, with over a hundred attending the conference. The papers were varied and interesting, and were presented as follows: Dr Joan Thirsk, 'The diffusion of agricultural knowledge in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries'; Dr Pamela Horn, 'The contribution of the propagandist to eighteenth-century agricultural improvement'; Dr Nicholas Goddard, 'The development and influence of agricultural newspapers and periodicals, 1780-1880'; and Dr John Walton, 'The auctioneering profession and agricultural innovation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'. The success of the conference was again due to the efforts made by Dr Dennis Baker and Dr Tony Phillips, and the Society extends its thanks to them.

SPRING CONFERENCE, 1981

The Spring Conference will be held at Horncastle Residential College, Lincolnshire, 6-8 April 1981. Papers will be presented by Professor Maurice Barley,

Dr John Beckett, Dr Steve Haresign, Ms Marie Stinson, and Mr Brian Wood. Mr Rex Russell will present an introduction to the local landscape and lead the excursion into rural Lindsey. It is hoped to arrange a visit to Laxton following the conclusion of the formal conference programme. A booking form and programme is inserted into this issue of the *Review*, but any enquiries should be addressed to the Secretary.

HISTORICAL ECOLOGY GROUP

The Historical Ecology Group of the British Ecology Society is holding its inaugural conference in Bangor, 6-8 April 1981 on the theme 'Upland Grassland Historical Ecology'. Details may be obtained from Mr Adrian Cowell, 7 Holt Coppice, Aughton Green, near Ormskirk, Lancashire.

FUTURE CONFERENCES

Members may wish to note the provisional dates for the Winter 1981 and the Spring 1982 conferences. The former is planned for Saturday 5 December on a theme to be arranged. For the first time in the Society's history, the Spring Conference is to be held in Scotland, probably at the University of St Andrews, 29-31 March 1982.

(continued on page 70)

The Essex Achievement

By SHIMON APPLEBAUM

THE publication of British Archaeological Report no 48, *Early Land Allotment in the British Isles*,¹ edited by H E Bowen and P J Fowler, contains one research report which seems to me to constitute a milestone in the study of the early agrarian history of England. I refer to the article by Warwick Rodwell, 'Relict Landscapes in Essex' (ibid, pp 89 sqq). Although I am far from the country which it concerns, the implications of the results there outlined are so important that I cannot refrain from recording a reaction in these pages. It is to be hoped that the work concerned has not escaped the notice of most readers interested in early agrarian history; the present note, nevertheless, may have something to add.

Essex is singularly lacking in traces of early iron age and medieval field-systems, also in Saxon charters, while the county's documentation of the enclosure period is sparse and inconclusive. This has led enquirers into Essex agrarian history to devise a different method of research which may be defined as landscape analysis, that is, the study of the relations between elements of the existing field-systems and fixed points or features such as churches, earthworks, dykes, Roman roads, dated settlements, and the like, with a view to determining the relative age of the former. This method has led to remarkable results: it has shown that very considerable field complexes in central and eastern Essex are pre-Roman or Roman in origin. It has demonstrated that the field-systems are earlier than Roman roads, and hinge upon hundred and parish boundaries, on dykes and sinuous lanes which bear no relation to medieval elements. At various points the early date of

the associated bounds and paths has been demonstrated by air-photography or by archaeological excavation. One of the remarkable by-products of these results, evident from the maps accompanying Rodwell's report, but less emphasized by the author, is the demonstration that numerous rural byways, often still in existence as lanes and country roads, were in use in the Roman period if not before. A new dimension, in fact, has been added to our view of Roman Essex, quite as important as the new dimension of air-reconnaissance added by O G S Crawford in the 1920s.

The Essex research did not begin yesterday. The antiquity of the pattern in the Dengie hundred was first suspected by Laver in 1895 and studied by Christy in 1926. Much of the relevant research must have been carried out before the 1970s, but most of the results have been published only since 1972. Their publication may have received an added impulse from the appearance in 1972 of Volume I Part ii of the *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, where this sector of research went unmentioned because its results had been but sparsely reported and little summarized. It was already realized (and this realization was indicated in the *Agrarian History's* discussion of continuity between Roman and Saxon Britain) that the prospects of revealing continuity in southern and eastern Britain were considerable. Moreover, a possible survival of a Roman field grid inside a medieval open-field system at Great Wymondley, Hertfordshire, was there proposed.²

¹ Warwick Rodwell, 'Early Land Allotment' in H C Bowen and P J Fowler (eds), *British Archaeological Reports No 48*, Oxford, 1978. 201 pp. 81 maps and plans. £4.

² Cf also *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, ed Finberg, I, ii, p 262: 'It may be asked, whether, in some localities where the very ancient nuclei of open field systems can be traced in this country, the boundaries enclosing the shotts of the mediaeval system do not represent pre-Saxon plots in certain cases.'

Readers must be left to master the full details of the 'Essex method' and its results from Rodwell's paper and from the fuller publications which he cites. Here I would like to describe very briefly two instances of field-pattern/villa relationships, both in East Anglia, which demonstrate the potentialities of the Essex investigations for the study of the Romano-British rural system.

The first case is that of a Roman villa known to have existed about 300 yards south-west of White Notley Hall in the valley of the River Brain, some five kilometres south of Braintree. The traces of the ancient field-pattern revealed by the researches of P J Drury in the Brain valley south of Braintree are shown on Fig 11.7 accompanying Rodwell's survey, and within the said map they extend to a point something like a mile north-west of the villa site. From the southernmost traces marked on Drury's map to the latitude of White Notley village and Hall, the axis of the present field-pattern is quite different and clearly does not belong to the ancient system, but south of the above latitude, in the immediate vicinity of the villa, the general axis of the ancient field pattern extending from Braintree is resumed, and the present fields are markedly rectilinear in form. There would indeed seem to be excellent prospects of determining the boundaries and extent of the villa-estate by further research.

The position of White Notley church, partly built of Roman material some way south of the present village, would suggest that the original settlement was not where the village is today. The Manor Hall itself was preceded by earthworks and a moat to its north, while Roman roof and hypocaust tiles are recorded from the Hall itself. The finds collected at White Notley Hall from the villa to south-westward contain elements of significance.³ The datable Roman pottery from

that site appears to begin in the second century, but the two most significant fragments are a sherd of grass-tempered ware attributable to the period following the end of official Roman administration in Britain, and a small fragment of ribbed 'Mediterranean' pottery commoner in the south-west of the country, and belonging to the sub-Roman period. Clearly, the prospects of tracing a 'carry over' on this and the neighbouring sites are considerable.

The second instance relates to the villa near Gayton Thorpe, Norfolk. Some years ago my attention was drawn to the fact that the modern north-south road to the east of the villa (certainly existent as a route in the Roman period) is parallel with the earlier excavated north building of the Roman establishment. The present second north-south field-boundary to the west of the villa lies parallel to, and precisely 20 *actus* from, the above road. (One *actus* = 120 Roman feet = 116 English feet.) The east-west boundary north of the Roman site measures 19½ *actus* from the west boundary to the same road. To the south-west of the villa the west field-boundary continues south as a parish-boundary, which then makes a right-angle turn to the east: from this point northward along the boundary to the north-west corner of the field-area containing the villa is 20 *actus*. The present field-area in which the villa stands is therefore very close to the standard Roman unit of 200 *iugera*. We are warned that Domesday figures are highly approximate; the record that Thorpe had sixty-one acres (close on 100 *iugera*) under Edward the Confessor is nevertheless suggestive.

I was unable to find an open-field record relating to the area of the villa itself, but was able to examine the estate maps further north, centred on Well Hall Farm, dated to c1720 and 1750, with additions of 1860, and the Tithe Award of Gayton Thorpe of the year 1843.⁴ Well Hall is a Roman site on the

³ It is a pleasure to record the hospitality and assistance of Mr and Mrs Rowan Butler of White Notley Hall, to whom I owe what I know of this site, and who set all possible information, and the finds made there, at my disposal.

⁴ For access to these documents I have to thank the records department of the County Hall, Norwich.

ancient route (the Icknield Way) that forms the east limit of the Gayton Thorpe area under discussion, and on which, or in whose proximity, Roman sites, including several villas, are distributed northward as far as the Norfolk coast. (These include Grimston, West Newton, Appleton Snettenham, Sedgeford, and Heacham.)

The above-cited maps show that the modern field boundaries in the areas recorded are in most cases determined by the medieval open-field strips; further, that their main north-south axis of orientation is the same as that of the fields associated with the Gayton Thorpe villa, ie 18–19 degrees west of the northing of the Ordnance Survey grid. The Gayton Thorpe boundaries therefore existed in the middle ages, and this receives some confirmation from an oblique air-photograph of the villa taken by Mr K St Joseph, and now in possession of Norwich Castle Museum, which shows to the west of the villa field medieval shotts whose general orientation is also east-west, on a bearing corresponding to that of the field itself.⁵ The same western boundary continues northward in a straight line for some distance, and bears directly on the Well Hall site.

It is therefore possible to conclude tentatively that the medieval field boundaries perpetuated in the present field-system, which extends northward from Gayton Thorpe and west of the Icknield Way, existed at least in part in the Roman period, and that some of the plots defined may have conformed to Roman standard surveying units. In this connection it should be remembered that the Gayton Thorpe villa has yielded a stamped tile of the VI legion Victrix, hence the assignation

of measured allotments to veterans in this area is not beyond the bounds of possibility.

Finally, it may be remarked that various sites in the same district have yielded evidence of continuous occupation from the Roman era to the Saxon period: such overlaps are indicated by pottery from Castle Acre, Broadmoor Hill, Appleton (a villa site), Sedgeford, and from the point where the Peddars Way crosses the Litcham-Gayton road. Two place-names also suggest Romano-British survival: they are Ashwicken, $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles west of the villa, and possibly East Walton, one mile east-south-east of it; Roman sites are known in the vicinity of each.

In conclusion the question must be asked: Is the Essex area unique or can the method there used be applied with prospects of equal success in other regions of the country? Independent archaeological evidence obtained over recent years suggests that continuity sites are numerous or readily available in Essex in particular, and in eastern England generally. The reason for this may well be the earlier peaceful penetration of English elements before the end of Roman rule. On the other hand, there is no reason to suppose that there was an extensive displacement of the Romano-British population in the south-west of England till the sixth century, and a fair amount of archaeological material pointing in that direction has come to light in the investigations of the last two or three decades. The vital difference affecting the conditions of research in Essex and elsewhere is perhaps the presence or absence of the open-field system and its subsequent enclosure, since the Essex enquiries have shown us that over much of that county fields were enclosed at a very early date and never superseded by an open-field regime. The Gayton Thorpe and Great Wymondley examples, nevertheless, might be taken to point to certain possibilities in relation to the open-field regions also, and should encourage investigators to look for the 'skeletons' or vestigial residues of earlier patterns within the open-field complexes.

⁵ I gladly here acknowledge the assistance of the staff of the Norwich Castle Museum, who furnished me with all available information relating to the archaeological aspects of the present brief study. The work relating to Gayton Thorpe was made possible by the visiting fellowship generously extended by All Souls College in 1973–74.

Annual List and Brief Review of Articles on Agrarian History, 1979¹

By RAINE MORGAN

A feature of recent years has been the attempt to reconstruct complex man-environment relationships by sophisticated interpretation of evidence gleaned from the landscape. Prehistorians in particular have used techniques of pollen analysis and radio-carbon dating to determine the nature of resource-exploitation and its impact. Much effort has been spent on the uplands of northern England and a number of articles report on recent findings. It was once thought that changes in the ecosystem here occurred only with the advent of farming, but Simmons (201) postulates deliberate firing of forest edges by Mesolithic societies to increase browse and attract game, leading in some areas to waterlogging of soils and irreversible formation of blanket peat. He also constructs a tentative model of Mesolithic settlement and economy in a year-round cycle. There is further discussion of the tools and debris found at Star Carr, Pitts (171) stating that this was not a temporary winter site as previously believed but a 'specialized industrial complex' where individuals stayed on during the summer months to carry out the treatment of animal hides and processing of antlers in the earliest known case of vegetable preparation and tanning. The North York Moors have also yielded information on subsequent human activity. Atherden and R L Jones *et al* (6, 122) describe findings which point to the wholesale clearance of trees during the late Iron Age and Romano-British period, while Judith Turner (214) contrasts the forested landscape and shifting agriculture of the north-east at the earlier period with the cleared woodland, maintained pasture and the cultivation of cereals and hemp on a quite different scale during the Roman occupation. Investigations are also progressing in the south-west. Palaeobotanical analysis is the main tool employed by Beckett and Hodder (13) to determine the phasing of prehistoric clearance and farming in the Somerset Levels, while Hamond (101) uses a different method in his study of Dartmoor during the Neolithic and Iron Age. Here the inter-relationship between settlement, economy and the environment is explored through the locational and morphological analysis of hut circles. Fleming's investi-

gation (84) of boundary patterns and settlement in the same area further illustrates the complexity of early subsistence systems and also our continuing lack of certain knowledge about them.

The role of sociological rather than biological or environmental factors is emphasized in another model of the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture, proposed by Vincent (218), in which an improvement in the status and economic productivity of women is crucial. It is argued that this improvement may have been triggered by a drying climate which increased the yield of nuts and seeds, and through the raised status this gave to women in their role as gatherers reduced female infanticide, raised population numbers and made agriculture necessary. In their survey of prehistoric development in Britain, Bradley and Hodder (24) collate cultural and economic evidence to identify three phases between the Neolithic and Iron Age on the basis of settlement, land-use and cultural patterns. Both articles are concerned with population growth and agricultural progress, echoing Ester Boserup's theory (*The conditions of agricultural growth*, 1965). This is critically examined by Grigg (94) who concludes that while population pressure is unlikely to be the only cause of technical change, as she maintains, and intensified cropping not the sole response, the thesis 'is still a remarkably fruitful interpretation of agrarian change'.

The concern with landscape and man-environment relationships referred to earlier, is not confined to prehistorians. Everitt (71, 72), for example, believes different types of economy and society are essentially a product of the physical environment and urges closer attention to contrasting *pays* or regions. A broad classification is offered, together with the results of preliminary investigations throwing light upon settlement history and upon the nature and development of county towns. Methods of reconstructing landscape change over long periods are outlined by Smith (204) in a retrogressive analysis of three Staffordshire parishes. As well as fieldwork an impressive array of documentary sources is used to chart developments over three millennia. Place-names are a standard tool of landscape archaeologists, and Faull (78), with reference to Anglo-Saxon Yorkshire, discusses some of the more significant elements which may be of value in tracing settlement patterns. Place-name evidence is employed by Hooke (107) in a reconstruction of the west

¹Publications are dated 1979 unless otherwise noted. References to articles or off-prints should be sent to the Bibliographical Unit, Institute of Agricultural History, University of Reading.

midlands landscape at the same period. She finds a countryside dominated by woods and undrained marshes with little in common either with primeval forest or the tamed landscape of today.

There is continuing debate about field systems. Butlin (34) notes that recent investigations have added little to our understanding of the Irish experience and believes that current thinking over-stresses both the element of continuity and the contrasts between 'alien' and 'native' types. In his view a variety of physical, social and economic forces led systems to adapt both spatially and temporally, and he predicts that future research will show a greater degree of complexity than ever imagined. Of course, variation and adaptability in English field systems is now accepted, but in Scotland infield-outfield farming has often been dismissed as a uniformly extensive and low-yielding adjunct to an essentially pastoral economy, incapable of evolution or improvement. White (228) contends, however, that in areas well supplied with lime and near urban markets it could and did evolve into an intensive system where grain was the primary concern and stock played a minor role. The question of origins is still unresolved, and Fox (86) proposes new avenues of enquiry to confirm the Thirsk thesis that two- and three-field systems developed from the early twelfth century due to pressure on grazing. Preliminary study shows that in the west with its irregular fields pasture values were low, whereas in the two- and three-field midlands they were high, and the author suggests a search for documentary evidence in the intermediate stretch of country where reorganization may have been undertaken sufficiently late in time to have been recorded. Archaeological methods of enquiry in an intensive field survey of Anglo-Saxon villages is also recommended to help establish the nature and timing of field development. Dodgshon (60) has employed a different approach in attempting his own interpretation of origins, based on Domesday Book and other sources. These reveal considerable splitting of townships between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries following upon population growth and reclamation which created the need to rationalize haphazard cropping and reduce problems of scale and complexity in farming. He concludes that early splitting and township reorganization may have provided a nursery for the development of what became the two- and three-field system. The theory put forward by McCloskey in 1975-76 that the scattering of holdings in open fields was entirely due to the desire to spread risk comes under attack. Wilson (233) questions his assumption that risks encountered in medieval farming would be much reduced by dispersal, and he also emphasizes the lack of evidence that English peasants consciously and deliberately retained scattering, or indeed were able to reorganize holdings without reference to the village framework. Still on English medieval farming, Harwood Long (131)

questions the view that the critically low yields were due to soil exhaustion and puts forward an alternative explanation. The basic problem was weed control, it being impossible to cross-plough the heavy ill-drained strips, while puny draught animals and inefficient tools could not eradicate perennial weeds. Thus corn yields were lower than on the better drained and well-tilled Broadbalk field at Rothamstead, despite continuous cropping without aid of manure. The very great variation in English land measurement at this time is described by Andrew Jones (119), while Nash in a separate article (155) stresses that even within a county measures varied according to local methods of land-division.

On the broader topic of medieval society in general, Wrightson and Razi (234, 184) evaluate the Toronto School's work on court rolls and highlight certain methodological problems in their analysis of village social structures. Criticism centres upon questionable identification of individuals and upon certain fundamental assumptions about the nature of rural peasant society. A large body of numerical data from two other sources has also been analysed by Darby *et al* (45). Their mapping of information from Domesday and the lay subsidies of 1334 and 1524-25 depicts changes in the geographical distribution of wealth. The evidence of land surveys and rentals has underpinned many studies of pre-industrial society, but it is now becoming clear that these sources can be a very misleading guide to landholding structure because of the prevalence of sub-tenancing. From an examination of unusually detailed manorial extents Andrew Jones (118) concludes that the neat patterns of virgates and semi-virgates shown on early documents may have been the exception rather than the rule. This is confirmed by Dewindt's study (52) of an active land market in medieval King's Ripton, where complicated leasing arrangements and sub-tenancies created multi-layered claims on a piece of land subsequently recorded in the name of a single individual. Similarly, a study by Harrison (102) of Elizabethan Cannock suggested that whereas sub-tenancing accounted for no more than 15 per cent in the official records, the fortuitous survival of a field book revealed that the true figure was over sixty, one-third of them absentee. Also on landholding, Jefferies' study of the Berkshire gentry (114) considers how a legal device, the medieval 'use', was employed to manipulate estates, while in another article Searle (198) shows that merchet functioned above all as a means to control villein tenure but also permitted the lord to tax female inheritance.

Among articles dealing with the early modern period two describe documentary sources and their potential use to historians. Chancery records have been little used in the past because they lacked a comprehensive index, but Beresford (17) draws attention to the recent analytical listing which has made them more accessible

to historians of landed property and tenure. Yields are a prime indicator of progress implicit in any 'agricultural revolution' yet reliable data are lacking. Overton (161) argues, however, that this deficiency can be overcome by statistical manipulations of evidence from the already heavily exploited probate inventories, and analyses material from East Anglia. Results suggest a 75 per cent increase in wheat between the 1590s and 1660s, which would seem to vindicate Kerridge's view of major achievement at this time. Estate history is the most prominent theme in current articles on the period. Habbakuk (97) discusses in a general way how ownership could change in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and suggests that landed families could more easily carry debt and avoid sales after 1650 than before. It is his thesis that strict settlement was a significant factor in the 'rise of great estates', but Bonfield (20) takes issue with this view. From a model of intergenerational succession and demographic evidence he concludes that some two-thirds of owners were prevented by early death or lack of male heirs from taking advantage of the device, nor was any correlation found between the possibility for resettlement and estate building among 'great magnates' in Northamptonshire. Taking a different approach, Broad (28) examines the impact of the Civil War on a single estate, and shows that neither political neutrality nor distance from the battleground could shield owners from the catastrophic effects of falling rents, high taxes and shortage of credit. Rapid recovery of the Verneys evidenced the flexibility of some landed families but further underlined the importance of chance factors such as marriage, family size and interest rates. The economic difficulties in the early 1600s of an Ulster estate are described by Roebuck (188), who finds the letting to middlemen on long lease at an uneconomic rent the main problem. Disposal of Somerset Crown land in the earlier mid-Tudor period is examined by Wyndham (235), who shows that those closest to the centre of power fared considerably better than those in the provinces. Taking an overall view of conditions in France and England between 1590 and 1640, Appleby (4) compares corn prices and harvests in an attempt to discover why England solved her food problem after 1650 and France did not, and concludes that a major factor was the balanced mix of grains cultivated, in particular the greater emphasis on oats and barley which were a cheap substitute for wheat. But in France the already small acreage of spring-sown cereals diminished further in the seventeenth century, so that in bad years prices of all grains soared and denied the poor a cheap alternative to wheat for bread-making. In an assessment of the impact of written leases on Scottish agriculture Whyte (230) dates their introduction to the century before rather than after 1700, and relates their nature and incidence to farming structure and rising farm incomes. Dairying in the

midlands is examined by Edwards (67), who describes the technical innovations employed to expand production there in the seventeenth century when demand locally and in London was rising. Migration is now attracting more attention, and Clark (39) reviews recent research before presenting new data on English population movements to explain, *inter alia*, the shift from long-distance toward local and seasonal migration after the Civil War. Regional variation is stressed by Salerno (193) in his study of emigrants from the wood-pasture and chalk areas of Wiltshire in the seventeenth century.

For the modern period Kain examines the value of tithe records (123, 124) and describes the eagerly awaited atlas he is compiling from data on England and Wales. The Poor Law Inspectors' returns of 1854 are another useful but comparatively neglected source of evidence on English land use, and Dodd has analysed returns from four counties (54-7) to show their value in depicting regional variation. For Ireland Solar (206) draws our attention to the 1835 agricultural trade statistics in the Railway Commissioners' reports, and warns that they are flawed by errors which exaggerate both the volume and value of exports. This seriously distorts the picture of, for example, remittances to absentee landlords and the 'product mix' of Irish agriculture. Johnson's estimate of cross-border cattle smuggling a century later (115) provides further proof of gross inaccuracy in some official records.

Enclosure is a continuing focus of attention. Baack (7) develops a theory of property rights as a framework for analysing its course from Tudor times. In it he views stinting and the extinction of common rights as the means whereby landowners and farmers could realize increased land values, and benefit from gains in output and income flowing from a greater 'exclusivity' of land use and land rights. Returning to the debate over the impact of parliamentary enclosure on the freeholder class, Martin (146) distinguishes between types of community on the one hand and between absentee owners and owner occupiers on the other. Both distinctions are found to be significant in a study of east Warwickshire, where small owners, mostly absentees, declined by a quarter within a decade of enclosure but where the severest impact was in 'open' townships with numerous freeholders. It was W E Tate's contention that Parliament dealt with enclosure bills not to secure the interests of the landowning class but rather to further the interests of the 'community at large'. However evidence produced by Martin in another article (145) casts serious doubt on this claim. Not only did individual legislators manipulate the passage of bills affecting their land but procedures to protect small owners and dissenters were abused or ignored. Nor was opposition to enclosure as uncommon as Tate has maintained. The landed elite is subject to further criticism in Richards's anatomy of

the Sutherland fortune (186). Much investment was haphazard and led to grave social dislocation for little if any profit; and the author notes that the cost of the aristocracy to the nation has yet to be calculated. Mismanagement of estates is the theme of two further articles. Colyer (40) charts the decline of the Pryse family of Gogerddan after 1800, and Farrant (77) partly blames owners' failure to recognize and adapt to changed circumstances in the late nineteenth century for the break-up of their properties on southern downland. It was traditionally believed that landlords were main agents of change, but Macdonald (140) concludes from a survey of Northumberland records that personal communication between practical farmers had greater effect, while apprentices and labourers also influenced the spread of new ideas. Studies of equipment have often focused on machinery, but Marshall (143) traces the origin and development of the Rotherham plough after 1730: although difficult to use it afforded savings in man and horse power on suitable soils. In another article, Macdonald (141) looks at the early progress of the threshing machine and argues that large farms, high wages and security of tenure explain its popularity in the north. Also on farm machinery, Vamplew (217) inquires into the changing price and quality of award-winning models during the third quarter of the nineteenth century and concludes that over this period the real cost of machinery fell while the price of labour steadily increased. The value of seasonal workers to British agriculture is further demonstrated by Devine (50), who shows that even the larger influx of Irish after 1840 was insufficient to meet the expanding labour requirement on farms in Scotland and northern England. Consequently Highlanders continued to provide vital effort during work peaks and through their own earnings helped sustain a fragile economy at home. That old chestnut, poor relief during the Napoleonic Wars, is revisited by Dunkley (62), who analyses the role of gentry-justices and shows how they extended their authority to alleviate distress after 1795, and prevented ratepayers from cutting relief as conditions worsened. Such behaviour he argues was founded on a definable 'morality' where the privilege of property was believed to confer obligations to protect the poor, and since the poor readily subscribed to this view justices had little choice but to conform to it, particularly under threats of violence. The large increase in poor relief at this time is viewed differently by Wells (223), who maintains it was made conditional upon deference and generated class conflict in the countryside. Driven underground by administrative repression, protest, he argues, had to remain essentially covert until after the 1850s. Horn (108) suggests why agricultural trade unionism among agricultural labourers was so weak in a case study of Berkshire, while Dewey (51) argues that this same weakness allowed large numbers of government-

controlled workers to be used during the First World War, thereby preventing a sharper rise in agricultural wage rates. Livestock is the subject of two articles. Whetham (224) identifies the boom in overseas demand for pedigree animals after 1850 and describes changes in the home trade which followed, while Carlyle (37) synthesizes information from published accounts and field studies to give a picture of the changing distribution of the main sheep breeds in Scotland since the 1790s. There has been comparatively little of note written on modern Irish agrarian history, but Almquist (2) taps the 1841 census to determine how far the expansion of rural industry was associated with other changes, such as population density, land fragmentation and more intensive methods of farming. In a study of retailing in rural Ireland between 1880 and 1914, Kennedy (126) suggests that its growth was a natural concomitant of depression. Frequently farmers were also shopkeepers, and as the labour-using tillage and dairying sectors declined so the sons and daughters tended more to cross the short distance from the farmyard to the other side of the shop counter.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Book Reviews

SIÂN E REES, *Agricultural Implements in Prehistoric and Roman Britain*. British Archaeological Reports, British Series 69 (I-II), Oxford, 1979. 772 pp. £17.50 (available post-free from BAR, 122 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7BP).

This book comprises three chapters: (1) The ard and the plough, including shares of stone and bone, wooden parts found in bogs, shares and coulter of iron and two models of ards of bronze from Roman times as well as a survey of the literary evidence written by classical Roman authors; in addition there is a survey of traction equipment and ploughing techniques; (2) manual cultivating tools, divided into hoes and mattocks, spades, and shovels, weeding-spuds and turf-cutters; (3) harvesting tools comprising sickles, hooks and scythes, mowers' anvils, forks and rakes. After each chapter follows a complete catalogue of all relevant specimens kept in collections in England, Wales and Scotland with references to provenance, museum- or site-number, main measurements, site and date, and a brief description as well as references to previous treatments in literature.

Dr Rees is not the first scholar to publish evidence on British agricultural implements from prehistoric and Roman times. Amongst her predecessors are such authorities as E C Curwen, C Fox, W H Manning, F G Payne, and K D White. But her summaries of viewpoints and discussions is valuable because of her judicious conclusions. Dr Rees has presented an almost exhaustive and up-to-date survey of the whole material with nineteen maps of distribution of types. She has drawn about 250 items to scale together with sections of their blades, shafts, sockets, etc. In the reviewer's opinion this is a great achievement. This book will be indispensable for experts in other countries as well as in Britain. Furthermore, she has studied and indicated, where possible, marks of wear which can often tell the way the tool was used. This is rare in previous studies of agricultural implements.

Of course she is aware of deficiencies which she would have liked to avoid if time and means had been available. Especially she mentions the lack of experiments carried out with replicas of the tools in question. Certainly the study has been open to much speculation without the advantage of practical experience. Even experiments may be inadequate to solve the problem of use because the experimenter often lacks knowledge himself about practices still carried on in other parts of the world. Ethno-Archaeology is a rather new concept in the English-speaking world, though ethnographic knowledge should be indispensable for every scholar who wishes to arrange imitative experiments.

Dr Rees refers to experiments with ard-ploughing carried out some years ago in the Historical and Archaeological Experiment Centre at Lejre, Denmark. These experiments provided us with important knowledge in other respects, but the researchers failed to imitate ploughing with an ard tilted to one side, though this is a normal practice in countries where farmers are still cultivating with an ard. And evidently the British ploughmen of antiquity used the same method, as can be seen from Dr Rees' diagrams in Fig 75. The conductor of an ard-plough will always walk on the ploughed furrows tilting his implement against himself, while an inexperienced amateur is inclined to walk behind with the ard in front of him. Consequently his control of the movements of the implement becomes ineffective. It requires long training to exercise full control of both the ard and its team.

If Dr Rees had been aware of Samuel Avitzur's excellent book on *The Native Ard of Eretz-Israel* (Tel-Aviv, 1965) she would have learned what is the decisive difference between what he calls the 'Sword-Ard' (Glob's Bow Ard, or what the reviewer would prefer to call the 'Stilt-Head Ard') and the 'Sole Ard' (Glob's Crook Ard). The first type — well known from the Danish Døstrup find — is capable of tilling the field down to 28 cm depth if filled with a brace-rider which stabilizes the junction between the stilt and the beam. But even without such a device the Stilt-Head Ard is the strongest construction of the two types; it can penetrate the soil to a considerable depth and consequently produces the marks in the sub-soil which have been detected and described in many countries during the last twenty-five years. In contradistinction to this, the Sole Ard produces shallower and wider furrows fitted to receive the seed. Avitzur illustrates the type furnished with a seed-funnel, and it is evidently this type which is depicted in the famous rock-carving from Litsleby, Sweden, showing a ploughman carrying a bag from which apparently he puts the seed into an open furrow.

Some ard-marks running parallel in one direction could possibly be traces of the Sole Ard? They are normally separated from each other with spaces of between 25 and 30 cm, and this could be explained by the practice of people walking between the rows to weed the seed. Dr Rees is puzzled by the random distribution of stone clearance cairns in Shetland and Orkney. But if she had known Gudmund Hatt's work on Danish prehistoric fields (*Oldtidsagre*, with an English summary, Copenhagen, 1949) she would have seen that this was a common practice. People would try to get rid of stones in the easiest possible way, and they often gathered them round a heavy stone; the ard could

easily avoid such impediments as cairns and big stones. But in Lem heath in West Jutland I observed that the cairns sometime had become oval in plan, the long axis parallel to the long side of the field, seemingly because the field had been ploughed only in one direction.

What I once said about the two mould strokers and the supporting cross-bar on the Stilt-head Ard need not be repeated here. It can be read in *Folk and Farm. Essays in Honour of A. T. Lucas* (Dublin, 1976) which is not in Dr Rees' bibliography. Her treatment of the Scottish stone shares needs no comments: the reviewer agrees that the problem of hafting should be solved by experimentation.

However, Dr Rees' treatment of the so-called 'Shoe-Last Axes' (stone shares) of the continent requires comment. It is not evident how the polish of wear observable on these tools could be produced on both the nose and the lower face of them. An ard has to be tipped in order to penetrate the soil, consequently the nose of its share will be worn and some of its upper face; but how could the lower face of its share happen to be worn in its sheltered position? It has never been demonstrated in properly arranged and controlled experiments, and a simple drawing on paper is not convincing.

The reviewer admits to have misinterpreted the Hunsbury spade-fashioned tools of iron as shares (Fig 26); Dr Rees is obviously right in her statement that they are something else — probably a tool for digging or weeding? In a review in *Tools and Tillage*, III, 4, 1969, Alexander Fenton of Edinburgh has shown that her wooden spade p 321, Fig 106, is a type of shovel, the sharp edge of which fits the cutting of matted grass sods. This shovel can produce very thin turfs, excellent for the building of escarpments on fortifications as well as for thatching. Archaeologists often find traces of such turfs when they cut profiles, and these could possibly be mistaken for plough-furrows.

Because the chapter on harvesting implements is principally based on formal instead of functional criteria, it has produced some confusion arising from earlier sophisticated classifications of development. Primarily the items should have been arranged because of the shape of their cutting edges, secondarily by mass and weight, and thirdly by the main shape of the tools. Even today different shapes of sickles can be used for the same purpose (see L Takács; *Itásgazdálkodásunk Emlékei*. English summary: *Relics of Hungarian Shifting Agriculture, Cleared Land and Method of Clearing*. Budapest, 1980). Some of the Hungarian tools are similar to Sian Rees' iron hooks and bill hooks, but others are bent backwards, ie balanced tools, like her iron bills and sickles. Consequently, it seems to be a little sophisticated to discriminate between reaping hooks and sickles. But Dr Rees is probably right in claiming the long Roman scythes to be used for hay-making rather than for the cutting of

corn; because of their abruptly curved neck they would be too weak for harvesting. It is also tempting, in accordance with her, to assume that the procedure of threshing was performed by oxen's or horses' feet on a circular threshing floor. May be also the *tribulum* with its flint teeth was used in Britain? If so an analysis of pieces of flint for wear marks should be initiated. The threshing flail is at least a later invention.

It will appear from what has been said that Dr Rees' work is a milestone in the study of the history of agriculture. It is so rich in information that it cannot receive full justice in a short review.

AXEL STEENBERG

NIGEL HARVEY, *The Industrial Archaeology of Farming in England and Wales*. Batsford, 1980. 232 pp. Illus. £15.

Industrial archaeology has been marketed widely by publishers over the last decade and on some occasions has been used to embrace subjects that could only with much imagination be incorporated within an acceptable definition of the term. The placing of, for example, hedges or livestock breeds within the scope of industrial archaeology would perhaps lead some to conclude that this process is continuing. But that would not be fair criticism of the attempt by Nigel Harvey in this new work to project agriculture across its broadest possible spectrum as an industrial activity of long standing, with remains and survivals from the past worthy of study literally in the field.

A synthesis of this nature has been badly needed for some years in the world of industrial archaeology. Apart from well-known farm installations, usually concerned with motive power, and processing operations such as milling, industrial archaeologists generally have allowed agriculture as a producing industry to slip through their fingers. Romantic conceptions of an uncomplicated and unchanging countryside take a long time dying and account for only passing references to farming in most textbooks on industrial archaeology. But the explosion of public interest during the 1970s in obsolete farm machinery and the farming systems they served has progressively been breaking down these barriers. At last the remains of the country's most widespread industry are slowly being subjected to the investigative techniques devised primarily for manufacturing and heavy industry.

In Mr Harvey's terms the farm is the location for an industry where organic substances to be consumed or used by man are produced. And he goes on to describe how the landscape, the raw materials, plant and machinery have been manipulated by agriculturists over the centuries to enable this activity to be carried out as efficiently as the period allowed. It is made clear at the

beginning that this is only an introduction, and it is difficult to see how this could not be so when the Middle Ages to almost the present day is spanned in well under 200 pages of text.

The chapter on Tools, Implements and Machines seems particularly to suffer from the blurring effects of generalization. While the landmark inventions and individuals are mentioned, little is made of the engineering enterprise of many firms, large and small, that combined to give agriculture its nineteenth- and twentieth-century industrial face. So many aspects are contained in the following section on farm buildings that it is often little more than a series of sub-headings. But buildings are a subject that Mr Harvey has surveyed most fully elsewhere, and this book stands on its comprehensive approach rather than depth of analysis.

The text is nevertheless detailed in its compactness and very valuably indicates locations of surviving sites of interest. Perhaps the most useful element of the book, however, is the reference section, extending over forty pages and detailing chapter by chapter the sources that the author has used in compiling the text. This agreeably illustrated book has much appeal for the interested general reader and will prove an excellent resource for anyone intending to study the archaeology of agriculture and the countryside. Mr Harvey's lead will surely be followed up by others in the future.

ROY BRIGDEN

JUNE A SHEPPARD, *The Origins and Evolution of Field and Settlement Patterns in the Herefordshire Manor of Marden*, Department of Geography, Queen Mary College, University of London, Occasional Papers No 15, 1979. 44 pp. Illus. £1.50.

This is an attempt to reconstruct the landscape development of the large manor of Marden, situated on the banks of the river Lugg north of Hereford. The starting point is a large-scale, detailed estate map of c1720, and using this source, together with the evidence of the existing landscape and of a few readily-available documentary sources, Dr Sheppard has been able to suggest the main stages through which the common fields, meadows, enclosures, and settlements have developed since the Iron Age. The study provides further useful evidence of continuity in landscape use and development to add to the growing number of similar studies from other parts of the country. Perhaps the most interesting of several points to emerge from this account is the suggestion that, as has been demonstrated in other parts of the country, the large Iron Age hill-fort of Sutton Walls within Marden manor was the centre of a chieftaincy controlling the surrounding area, and that the Sutton Walls site was

the precursor of a royal multiple estate which subsequently became the hundred of Thornlaw. There is certainly an impressive correlation between the hypothetical bounds suggested for the Sutton Walls chieftaincy, using modern archaeological and geographical techniques of spatial analysis, and the actual boundary of the eleventh-century Thornlaw as reconstructed from the Domesday Survey. Dr Sheppard is also able to show with the aid of an informative series of maps the changes which have occurred in the landscape and settlements, the extension of the common fields, variations in farm sizes and the evolution of the modern pattern of land use.

As an exercise in landscape reconstruction this is excellent, but as the author herself acknowledges, it is too brief to answer all the questions it raises. Marden is rich in documentary material, and Dr Sheppard refers to several sources which she has not as yet analysed in detail, such as manorial surveys of 1608 and 1649 and an Enclosure Act as early as 1606, as well as several medieval sources. These would no doubt provide useful evidence concerning her hypotheses and about field systems, land-use and tenurial and other relationships within the manor. The evidence of aerial photography and of systematic fieldwork would also add another dimension to the study. It is to be hoped that Dr Sheppard's stimulating work and suggestions will be followed by yet more detailed work on what is clearly a promising area for the investigation of field systems, settlement patterns and the evolution of the landscape since the Iron Age.

J H BETTEY

E E RICH and C H WILSON, *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Volume V, The Economic Organization of Early Modern Europe*. CUP, 1977. x + 749 pp. £18.50.

This volume of the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe* concentrates on the organization of agricultural and industrial production, of commerce and of financial exchange, filling in gaps in the economic history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which were left after the appearance of Volume IV in 1967. Most of its chapters are written by scholars of long experience and wide knowledge, and hence it distils much cumulative wisdom. This is particularly true of Charles Wilson's first chapter, which has a very broad perspective, and sometimes casts brilliant shafts of light on shifts of fortune between similar industries and similar trades in different countries of Europe. And yet those brief, clear glimpses of one or two branches of economic activity are heavily biased towards Holland, England and Italy, and only serve to highlight the depths of our ignorance on other countries and innumerable other topics. We

should know far more about the economies of Spain and Portugal, far more about the international organization of horticulture and the horse trade, far more about fuel supplies and sales, and the innovations for economizing in its use. But for the fact that A R Michell incorporates his own original research on fisheries to provide a stimulating account of the European scene, the subject would hardly have featured in this volume; from the shortness of his bibliography, one sees only too clearly how little work has preceded his. Professor Kellenbenz, in his chapter on industrial production, is better served by other scholars who have studied the major textile, metal, and mining industries, but his short reference to the luxury, versus the mass, market in consumer goods broaches a subject, embracing innumerable smaller industries, that badly needs more attention.

Nevertheless, across broad tracks of ignorance some well charted features are effectively portrayed. Kristoff Glamann summarizes the main items in domestic industrial consumption and the trading channels along which they were distributed. Barry Supple writes elegantly and comprehensively on the nature of enterprise, though he omits agricultural entrepreneurs, and his narrative is so refined and distilled that not a single identifiable human being of flesh and blood crosses his pages. Herman van der Wee writes on the functioning of monetary systems, banking and credit, and Betty Behrens on the autocratic governments of France, Prussia and the Hapsburg dominions, and the contribution which their policies made to economic development.

Of most interest to readers of this *Review* is the chapter on 'Agriculture in the Vital Revolution' by B H Slicher van Bath. His task was plainly difficult because he had already covered much of the ground in his *Agrarian History of Western Europe*, and, presumably, did not wish to repeat himself. So he chooses in this volume to start by enunciating some basic facts about agriculture as a business enterprise, supplementing this with some average figures of early modern crop yields, livestock weights, and volumes of cereal consumption, together with a list of alternative tillage systems. He then proceeds to discuss the different weather conditions required for different crops, and tabulates some typical conjunctures of agricultural events, those occurring in periods of economic prosperity on the one hand, and economic depression on the other. This use of some twenty pages out of a total chapter of ninety pages is somewhat eccentric, though such information will be of great value to teachers of agricultural history who wish to build up a sound foundation of basic knowledge in their pupils. They will find here a reliable index of yield ratios, a table showing the progress of fen drainage in the Netherlands decade by decade, and precise examples of the rates of application of manure.

Drawing on a wide range of examples that are especially rich for the Netherlands, Germany and England, Slicher van Bath then makes some judicious and well considered general comments about agricultural development in the early modern period. His most important conclusions are thoroughly well considered, but may not all be fashionable, and so may not all be heeded as they deserve. He argues that some agricultural yields were as high in the fourteenth century as in the nineteenth century; and the only reason why high yields were not universal was that the economic incentives were not sufficient in many regions. The basic elements of the Norfolk system of husbandry, he points out, were already present in Western Europe in the sixteenth century; what was new in the eighteenth century was not the rotation, but the economic circumstances which made this intensive system advantageous on a large scale in more places. Similarly the impressive long-haul cattle trade across Europe was a temporary phenomenon of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, he argues, surviving only so long as economic circumstances favoured it; the favourable conjuncture depended on population levels, transport systems and the availability of markets. In his discussion of land ownership, he criticizes the biased preference of the historian for owners of land who are always thought to be superior to tenants. In fact, he says, owner-occupiers usually clustered on poorer land, while the better agricultural land was generally in the hands of tenant-farmers.

No one will read this chapter without learning important truths about the constraints and opportunities for change in agriculture at different times. It conveys clearly much information about the complex and diversified specialities of regions. It does not, however, attempt to convey the interdependence of regions, and their changing relationships in this period. It offers a static, rather than a dynamic, picture of regional specialities. It certainly explains the alternative courses of action available to each group of specialist farmers as circumstances changed, but it does not show regions undergoing change, and so setting up repercussions among their neighbours. Such illustrations are clearly not available for some countries. As Charles Wilson makes plain in Chapter I, the evidence is very patchy for Italy, and worse still for Spain. But the study of the Netherlands and of England has reached a much more advanced stage. It is time now to show, if only tentatively, the way in which individual regional economies were at one moment comfortably integrated with others, and then were disturbed by changes in the world around them, and so had to be reorganized. The decline of the long distance cattle trade from Eastern Europe offers one obvious example; when it faded away, what replaced it? The rise of dairying and distilling in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries offers others. In how many centres did these activities

flourish, and through what, possibly different, processes of economic and social change had rural communities passed before they settled on these new specialities? And finally what new ties of exchange or dependence did they forge with neighbouring and with distant communities? Questions like these underline the contrast in economic conditions before and after 1500. Medieval agriculture was far less specialized than in the early modern period. After 1500 enhanced specialization runs like a thread through all branches of economic life. It had merits — it certainly raised standards of living in some places and among some classes — but it also exposed men to new hazards. Moreover, the specialized regions depended in important respects and to a greater extent than ever before, on the unspecialized ones. This reminds us that the farming of all the traditional agrarian economies of Europe deserve as much study as the most innovative ones.

JOAN THIRSK

J R LOWERSON (ed), *Southern History II*. Dawson, Folkestone. 1980. 282 pp. Tables, figs. £12.

Despite problems with the publisher the second volume of *Southern History* is a worthy successor to the 1979 publication; and it is to be hoped that the same high standard of production can be maintained in the future, though the inevitable increase in price is itself indicative of the difficulties which journals devoted to serious research face, especially if published in hardback.

As before, the intent is to include essays covering the south of England from Cornwall to Kent and also to embrace, so far as possible, the period from the Conquest to the present day. In two ways this ideal coverage is less well achieved in the present volume for, excluding the final article — a general survey of tertiary education in the region, Devon, Wiltshire, Hampshire, and Sussex are the only counties directly involved, and half the book is devoted to the past hundred and fifty years.

Another imbalance of some significance to those engaged in agrarian history is the emphasis on urban affairs. Five of the eight historical articles are devoted to aspects of this subject, though in many ways there is much of wider interest contained in these papers. The study of the origins of the two small towns of Steyning and Bramber probes some of the earliest evidence for market towns and indicates the impact of local politics on the fortunes of the older settlement; while Mr Nash's paper on mortality among Wiltshire lords of the manor between 1242 and 1377 acts as a corrective to the tendency to concentrate on the peasantry in that period. So, too, the long and well researched article by Mr Roberts on alehouse and brewery legislation has a

far wider significance for the study of a basic industry than the concentration on Devon would suggest. This is one of the major contributions to this volume and it is sad that it is not altogether easy to read, possibly because essentially a digest of a longer dissertation, for it is an important statement. The review of parliamentary enclosure in West Sussex is a timely re-assessment of the work of W E Tate, and comparable studies for other counties would be welcome.

The next four articles concern Southsea, Exeter, Lewes, and Southampton and their content has less immediate relation to agrarian affairs, yet in each there is matter of substance and import. The skilful use of rating and renting records in respect of the development of part of a town suggests possible wider applications where similar records survive; the subject of food riots, although primarily relating to urban society, has a far greater connotation; and even the voting patterns in Lewes between 1865 and 1868 are indicative of the close association between town and country during the last century. Perhaps one of the most striking contributions is that by Dr Vinson on poor relief and unemployment in Southampton during the years between the Wars. This is so in part because of the topicality of the subject, partly because of the clear and well thought-out presentation and partly because of the interest revealed in two Boards of Guardians in close proximity to one another, one essentially urban and the other, at heart, rural, but faced with similar problems. Finally there is Mr Lowerson's survey of local history as a study within the region in universities, polytechnics, and colleges of further education. This, of course, is comparable with Nigel Yates's paper on archival resources last year and is once more a most valuable general survey.

Perhaps, however, one is left this year with a wish that research available for publication was more evenly spread over the region; and one feels impelled to express the hope that the rich resources of Kent and Somerset, to say nothing of the other 'missing' counties, may be used to equally good effect for some future volume. The value of the venture is clear and is accepted, it is to be hoped that it will attract scholarship from the entire region and thus provide volumes still more comprehensive in their content.

FELIX HULL

J S MORRILL (compiler), *Seventeenth-Century Britain, 1603-1714* (Critical Bibliographies in Modern History). Dawson, Folkestone. 1980. 189 pp. £11.

Dr Morrill's book is the second in this new series of critical bibliographies and it offers a select list of 885 books and 478 articles, the majority of which have been published since 1960. His book is sectionalized under

eight main headings and within the different sections the listed books, accompanied by pithy editorial descriptions and comments, are sub-divided either chronologically or thematically. There are frequent cross-references and an index of authors and editors.

The select list is aimed at students, teachers and librarians, and will undoubtedly be most useful to those whose chief interests are in seventeenth-century politics and government. The sub-section exclusively concerned with agricultural history, in contrast, is a very brief one, though the student will find other relevant items listed under Social History and Local History. Morrill makes some hard-hitting comments on the present state of economic and social history. Economic historians, we are told, suffer from an 'underlying lack of data which will forever condemn them to an inexactitude unbecoming to their profession'. Social historians of the seventeenth century, on the other hand, 'have squandered what few resources they possess'. Specialists will certainly question these general verdicts, and some of them will no doubt be surprised by Dr Morrill's belief that seventeenth-century roads and the leather industry are two subjects which still await their historians. The balance of editorial matter, too, seems questionable at times. Volume IV of the *Agrarian History of England and Wales* (1967), for example, is awarded only five and a half lines of editorial comment while Philip Styles's quasi-antiquarian *Studies in Seventeenth-Century West Midlands History* (1978) gets twice as much space devoted to it.

Although the general standard of accuracy is quite high, there are a number of irritating errors in the book. The mis-numberings on pp 27 (line 13: 93 for 89), 57 (line 21: 395 for 305) and 151 (line 3: 842 for 843) are probably the result of careless proofreading. Elsewhere, however, book titles (for example, items 549, 717 and 718) and dates of publication (for example, items 21, 305, 522, and Haigh's book referred to on p 126) are given incorrectly. More serious doubts arise about the merits of the actual arrangement of Dr Morrill's selection of entries. Why, for instance, have book titles and articles in separate parts of the book? And why have editorial comments and descriptions of books grouped together in sections rather than placed immediately below the volume to which they relate? Dr Morrill's methods of presentation do not always facilitate the use of what is, after all, designed as a reference work. His book, despite some obvious merits, can only be described as a qualified success. In any case, students, teachers and librarians will need to go on using the standard bibliographies for this period.

R C RICHARDSON

PETER ROEBUCK, *Yorkshire Baronets 1640-1760: Families, Estates and Fortunes*. OUP for University of Hull. 1980. xvii + 414 pp. £18.50.

Case studies which provide detailed evidence to confirm or modify generalizations about the evolution of landed society have become fairly numerous for the period before 1640, but there are very few available in print relating to the century or so after the Civil War. Indeed, until quite recently almost all those which had been undertaken had remained as unpublished theses. In 1975, however, one of the most frequently cited of these, Parker's study of the Cokes of Norfolk, appeared, little altered, in book form. Dr Roebuck's book also represents the conversion of a doctoral thesis of a number of years' standing into a book, although it is good to be able to report that he has added much new material and has thus been able to set his four family economic histories in a much broader setting than Dr Parker attempted to do.

The families in question are the Hothams of Scarborough and South Dalton, the Beaumonts of Whitley, the Constables of Everingham, and the Brights of Carbrook and Badsworth, and the chapters devoted to them occupy more than half the length of the book. All are interesting, especially because they were families of the second rank whose affairs have in general attracted less historical attention in this period than those of the great territorial magnates. The disadvantage of writing about gentry families rather than great aristocratic ones, however, is that their archives are almost invariably thinner. Thus whilst the author is able to discuss the economic position of his subjects very fully, and to show how and why it altered over time, relatively little emerges about personalities or (save what may be inferred) about the motives which determined personal actions. This is particularly unfortunate since the first lesson to be derived from this book is the importance of the character and behaviour of the individual landowner in shaping the fortunes of his family — often for decades after he himself had been laid to rest. It is, of course, the uniqueness of every family history, and the capacity that each one seems to have to highlight some new facet of the process of economic and social change within landed society, that makes studies such as these of such absorbing interest to anyone (such as the present reviewer) who has undertaken a similar type of research himself. However, the inability of the author, through no fault of his own, to make any of his landowners come alive, and the great (sometimes laborious) length at which their finances are expounded, will make the central portion of the book rather heavy going for the non-specialist.

Most readers will therefore find the first and last chapters more interesting, for here Dr Roebuck combines conclusions drawn from his four detailed studies with data derived from his investigation into all the other landed families of Yorkshire which achieved

the rank of baronet in the period. The result is a useful contribution to the evolving debate on the nature and extent of change in the upper and middle reaches of landed society in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but it is in the nature of the subject matter that his conclusions cannot readily be summarized in a sentence or two. However, he shows very clearly how such factors as the Civil War and its aftermath, agricultural depression, inheritances, and the failure of male heirs, and the continuing high level of activity on the land market, operated in practice — and they do seem to have brought about a persistent tendency for property to become concentrated into fewer hands. His conclusion that, in Yorkshire, landed society in this period was less stable than Habakkuk found to be the case in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, seems to be incontrovertible, and is in accordance with recent findings for several other counties. In much of the country, perhaps most of it, the age of 'massive stability' for the landowning elite did not begin until the middle of the eighteenth century at the earliest.

CHRISTOPHER CLAY

T M DEVINE (ed), *Lairds and Improvement in the Scotland of the Enlightenment*. Proceedings of the Ninth Scottish Historical Conference. 1978. iv + 70 pp. £3.

This volume brings together seven essays which were first delivered as lectures at a conference held in Edinburgh in 1978. As an attack on the theme indicated by the title it has, then, the deficiencies generally present when scholars supposedly in the same field of study are brought together to give the results of their research. Each must follow the lines of his or her interest and knowledge, and it is always probable that the coverage of the field will be partial and random. So it is here; indeed the book turns out to be Hamlet without the prince. Not one of the contributions treats of what, *prima facie*, should be the centre of an exhaustive treatment of the theme, namely the part played by lairds in the great movement of lowland agriculture which took Scotland from a laggard to a foremost position in European agriculture. John di Folco writes in the first essay of the process of change and the part played by the lairds in a group of Fife estates in the seventeenth century. It is a careful study of estate detail, stopping short in 1679, but with some significance for later development in showing in a way that confirms other recent studies that the Scottish agriculture of the seventeenth century was never the static monstrosity that the writers of the later eighteenth century were apt to depict. Tom Devine moves to the other end of the period of change and looks at social feelings among agricultural workers in

the period from 1780 to 1840. It is true that this is focused on a period when change was rapid and deep but, after a short initial survey of the process of change, he is more concerned with the results than with the generation of change. Moreover, it is the relations of agricultural workers with tenant farmers rather than with lairds that mainly concerns him. This is, however, a contribution which takes the broad view yet is solidly based and which is full of novel insights: an important contribution in its own right.

Most of the remaining essays are concerned either with industrial matters or with the peripheral areas of the Highlands and Shetland where agricultural improvement made much less impact. Alastair Durie attacks the intricate problem of the sources of the funds invested in industry and the relative importance of the lairds as contributors within the general frame. The linen industry is investigated to show how the capital streams flow together. He is able to demonstrate with clarity and authority the capital needs of this industry, but the supply side is altogether more elusive and less amenable to quantification. Again the institutions concerned are well described but it proves impossible to determine, except in list form, just how important were the different groups. It is probably fair to say that the role of landlords is played down as compared with more self-made men of the merchant or professional classes. But we do find here names that will crop up again as ardent agricultural improvers in other spheres. And the very display of the intricacy of the problem and the limits of knowledge is an achievement.

Brian Smith grips the reader with a vigorous intervention in a controversy that may be new to many, the role of the different landlord groups who followed each other successively in the control of Shetland life. The Norse lords, the Scottish lairds, the lairds turned traders, the merchants who became landowners — the designation of these groups is by no means novel but the origins of each as it emerges is shown in a new light; we hear too of important dips in prosperity that led to changes of land-ownership. But the essential account of the intervention of lairds and merchants in the fishing trade and of the effect it had on the condition of the people and of agriculture is scarcely novel. The controversy here seems to be largely on whether we care to describe these as destructive or progressive.

There are two contributions on the Highlands and both are based on the masses of documents thrown up by the administration of the annexed estates. Virginia Wills deals with the agricultural, and Annette Smith with the industrial, efforts of the commissioners. Neither makes great claims for advance secured by the earnest administrators but both can argue persuasively a detailed knowledge of the extensive documentation of their field. At least by implication they show the nature of the difficulties hindering improvement, whether

agricultural or industrial, in the Highlands, thus reflecting on the whole later course of development in the Highlands.

An essay much on its own is that by Alan Tait, writing on 'Robert Adam and the Picturesque'. Tait is obviously uneasy in connecting Robert Adam with the land-owning classes and his essay is almost entirely on Adam's artistic attitudes. He does not deal with the way in which this fitted with the perceptions and ambitions of Adam's land-owning clients.

MALCOLM GRAY

HAROLD B CARTER (ed), *The Sheep and Wool Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks 1781-1820*. Library Council of NSW and British Museum (Natural History). 1979. xxx + 641 pp. £35.

This book, which prints for the first time a selection of the sheep and wool correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks, was published under the terms of the New South Wales *Sir Joseph Banks Memorial Act*, 1945. The preface by the editor explains that the volume originated with the work that lay behind his book: *His Majesty's Spanish Flock* (1964, reviewed by present reviewer on pp 129-31 of vol XIII, 2, 1965). There are over 1400 letters and documents transcribed by the editor and arranged in chronological order, most of the originals of which are in the Sutro Library, San Francisco. Following the preface there is a nine-page biographical introduction on the place of Banks in British agriculture, and a two-page textual introduction which indicates how the documents came to be in the Sutro Library. The scale of Banks's activities can be judged from the estimated lifetime correspondence of 100,000 letters. Those published here comprise nearly half-a-million words with some 320 correspondents, but only 430 are written by Banks.

The text itself begins with a forty-page index of the correspondents, and the documents themselves occupy nearly 500 pages. Each document is printed as nearly as possible in the form in which it was written, but whereas those from other people are final versions, the letters of Banks are usually rough drafts, which are therefore revealing. The footnotes have been conveniently placed at the end of the book, where there is also a useful bibliography of works published between 1755 and 1824, described as 'select' yet extending to twenty-five pages. Most of the entries in the index are surnames, but there are many under 'sheep' and 'wool' which enables this volume to be used as an important source of evidence on the period covered.

Also at the end are forty-five pages of appendices and tables, which lack an explanation either here or in the introduction. This means that it is difficult to use them without discovering the letter in which presumably

they are mentioned. Cross-references would have been invaluable here. The eight tables comprise wool fibre diameter measurements which one gleans from the acknowledgements were made from samples of wool found with the documents. It is a pity that there is no discussion of the biological significance of these, nor reference to considerable other measurements that have been published in recent years. On the other hand, if one regards these as raw data like the documents, one must thank Mr Carter for having had the measurements made and for publishing them in this way for use by others — they will certainly be most useful in my work on fleece evolution.

The attention given by Mr Carter to detail, which became tedious in his 1964 volume, must here be commended, and we must be grateful that he has devoted twenty years of his spare time to transcribing and arranging the documents here presented. They provide a unique source of study material from an important period in the history of sheep in Britain and the establishment of the Merino breed in Australia. During the same period Banks was President of the Royal Society, and as friend and adviser of George III it was he who secured for the British Empire an effective breeding nucleus of Spanish Merino sheep.

M L RYDER

JOHN BARRELL, *The dark side of the landscape*. CUP. 1980. 179 pp. 66 illus. £15.

The sub-title rather than the title of John Barrell's book presents a clearer indication of its subject matter: *The rural poor in English painting 1730-1840*. The author considers the manner in which artists painted figures, and the way in which the themes of the pictures are seen today. He argues that in order to comprehend the depictions it is necessary to understand the social position of the poor in society, and that the original ideas behind the themes have become obscured.

Illustrating his ideas through the work of several artists, he makes especial use of the paintings of Thomas Gainsborough, George Morland and John Constable. Of the three studies, that on Morland is the most sympathetic, Barrell putting forward the idea that Morland intended his rustic figures to be seen as discontented and idle, and not the cheerful and industrious figures which his patrons saw. In the section on Constable Barrell looks at the way in which depiction of men working in the fields became more distant with the progress of time. He suggests that Constable wished to indicate the virtues of the rural labourer in contact with the earth at a time when an increasing number of men were working in the crowded conditions of the industrialization which was encroaching into the countryside.

Though Barrell presents a clear understanding of the influence on English art of pastoral literature and European styles of art, he has tended to look at the paintings through the eyes of other art historians rather than at the subjects most obvious in the pictures. For example, he misses an aspect of the quotation from Robert Bloomfield:

But, unassisted through each toilsome day
With smiling brow the Plowman cleaves his way.

Constable used this as a preface to his painting of ploughing, *Dedham Vale*. Barrell takes the quotation as a reference to the loneliness of the ploughman, who is without the assistance of a ploughboy, and contends that the use of the word 'smiling' is ironic. But the reason for using the couplet was that Constable showed a design of plough which required the strength of two, rather than four, horses, the construction of the plough with its single handle enabling the ploughman to control both plough and horses, thus dispensing with the need for a ploughboy.

It is a shame that the obvious agricultural details are not as deeply researched in this book as in Barrell's previous work, *The Idea of the Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840* (CUP, 1972), the appendix of which contains an excellent study of enclosures. However, on the general level close attention has been paid to economic, social and agricultural studies of the period, and the author has used them well to illustrate his argument.

The ideas of the period are explained with clarity, and this is a book which is both enjoyable to read and informative. For a wider understanding of paintings as records of agrarian tasks and related subjects this is a valuable study.

HILARY C WATSON

MICHAEL TURNER, *English Parliamentary Enclosure*. Dawson, Folkestone. 1980. 247 pp. 20 figs, 34 tables; £13.

Dr Michael Turner's work as editor of the late W E Tate's papers provided us two years ago with a great mass of raw data on the enclosure movement in *A Domesday of English Enclosure Acts and Awards*; in this volume he offers his interpretation of this material. Such a general survey was very much needed, for it is some sixty years since the last attempt to portray the movement as a whole, and Dr Turner has brought together the results of the great volume of research undertaken during this period as well as contributing his own thoughts and conclusions. The volume examines both the spatial and temporal distribution of enclosure, discusses in some detail the varying theories put forward to explain these distributions, and offers a summary of work on pre-enclosure changes together

with the author's own Buckinghamshire evidence on the effects of landownership upon enclosure. A substantial portion is concerned with statistical analyses of the Act data, and the results of attempts at correlation with factors such as wheat prices and other price indices. These results provide some interesting evidence on the general relationships of the enclosure movement.

Unfortunately, substantial doubt must be cast on the validity of some of the original statistics, and especially on the use made of them. The division of all enclosures into those containing 'mainly open field arable' and those 'exclusively of common and waste' cannot be justified, for many enclosures contained open field but were nevertheless dominated by common and waste. Worse, in some of the analysis even the qualifying 'mainly' seems to have been overlooked, and the assumption made that this group consists entirely of open field. The result is not only to invalidate some of the detailed conclusions but to leave the whole work heavily biased towards open-field enclosure.

J CHAPMAN

G J LEWIS, *Rural Communities: a Social Geography*. Newton Abbot. David & Charles. 1979. £9.50.

A mutual interest in the making and the changing of rural landscapes has ensured a long and productive dialogue between agricultural historians and historical geographers, from which studies of rural settlements and of field systems have probably been the principal beneficiaries. Through the writings of historical geographers many agricultural historians have been made aware of the diversity of a geographical concern which embraces not only man as an agent of landscape change but also of regional differentiation and of altering patterns and processes in the ecology of man's relationship to his physical environment. But perhaps because few historical geographers have, until recently, manifested an overt interest in another principal geographical concern, the locational analysis of human activity, this branch of geographical enquiry has remained relatively hidden from the view of many agricultural historians. In his survey, therefore, Dr Lewis performs a useful service in synthesizing much of the recently published geographical literature on the locational analysis of the social geography of rural communities.

Although the emphasis of Dr Lewis's book is on the modern transformation of rural communities, it includes both an historical perspective and a review of some analytical concepts and techniques which might be employed to throw light upon earlier agrarian societies. A brief introductory chapter on the urbanization of the countryside is followed by an examination

of theories of community. The author then discusses what he terms 'the main agents of social change' — the migration of people and the diffusion of ideas. A chapter on the morphology of rural settlements appears as a somewhat incongruous interlude before Dr Lewis resumes his review of rural communities as localities and as social ecologies. Drawing substantially, but effectively, upon Margaret Stacey's work, he then offers a synthesis of community life before considering some analytical approaches to it. By way of ending rather than concluding Dr Lewis comments very briefly upon three themes which he suggests merit further consideration: the role of the geographical perspective in rural community study; the changing nature of the countryside; and the question of relevance in academic study.

As a survey and a synthesis of much of the literature of the 1960s and early 1970s on the social geography of rural communities, this book will be a useful introduction to the topic for those coming to it for the first time — such as undergraduates following courses in rural geography — as well as for those approaching it from a cognate discipline — such as agricultural historians. The explicit concern with the spatial organization of rural communities and localities is both a strength and a weakness, for it allows the author to focus his interest sharply upon locational matters but it also prevents him from considering very seriously the alternative view of space as a dependent variable with understanding the social control of space being more crucial than that of describing the spatial organization of society. While the locational analysts have undoubtedly provided better descriptions of the patterns of rural communities at various scales, Dr Lewis's book confirms the view that they have as yet added much less to our understanding of the networks of flows within and between those communities, whether of people, ideas, goods, or capital. For a book on social geography there is remarkably little discussion of social relations within rural communities. Yet the social conflict within them was and is often a struggle to control space rather than to be subjected to locational constraints as a consequence of the more successful control of space by others. The battle for space within rural communities is but one expression of the class struggle within them. Admirable though Dr Lewis's book is in many ways, its rural communities often appear to lack a vital element: people.

ALAN R H BAKER

R J OLNEY, *Rural Society and County Government in Nineteenth Century Lincolnshire*. History of Lincolnshire Committee for the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, Lincoln. 1979. xiv + 202 pp. 14 pp of plates, 7 text figures. £8.50.

In this the tenth volume of the History of Lincolnshire series, R J Olney searches for a sense of county

consciousness in the society and government of nineteenth-century Lincolnshire. Isolated, diverse, lacking good roads and inns, the Lincolnshire of 1800 was only just beginning to achieve cohesion. By 1900, after agricultural depression had replaced the high noon of Victorian prosperity, county feeling had already been 'sapped by the partial industrialisation of Lincolnshire'. Yet in the years of agricultural advance during the second and third quarters of the century the county enjoyed a sense of identity and confidence based largely upon the achievements of its farming community and the classes most closely associated with it. Land agents, attorneys, bankers, manufacturers, merchants, and clergy were interdependent and often inter-related. Sir Charles Anderson thought that agents and attorneys rather than the great landowners ruled the county. Clergy who enjoyed incomes of at least £400 a year were favoured by Lord Brownlow when as Lord-lieutenant he was looking for magistrates. Resident in the villages, accomplished in public business, and politically sound as upholders of authority they, together with the gentry, were natural choices even though this policy kept Lincolnshire short of justices by comparison with Norfolk, Kent, Devon, and Sussex. Lincolnshire's social life is examined in chapters on landed society, the middle class and farm labour and village life, while the growth — sometimes painful — of co-operation over police, county gaols and public service is discussed in chapters on the lieutenancy and magistracy, local authorities and party politics.

In all of these Dr Olney's knowledge of Victorian Lincolnshire and its archives is invaluable. The reader is never submerged in detail and sight is never lost of the quest for a sense of county. Perhaps in describing Lincolnshire's briefly enjoyed cohesion Dr Olney is at his best in identifying the causes of its eventual fragmentation; Methodism, railways, education, the rapid growth of Grimsby, agricultural depression and the shrinking of the gentry and the rural upper middle class. In 1900 most Lincolnshire residents could travel to Lincoln, transact business, and return home the same night, but the railway network which made this possible was linking Lindsey more firmly with Lancashire, the West Riding and the Midlands than with Holland or Kesteven. In county politics national and imperial issues like Ireland and South Africa had a place whereas formerly wool imports, the malt tax and the price of wheat and barley had held the stage.

So much has been written about Victorian self-confidence in urban, industrialized settings that it is refreshing to have this account of it in a rural context with its implications for county government so interestingly explained. This volume is of importance for all students of English rural life and county politics in the nineteenth century as well as for those with a particular interest in Lincolnshire's local history.

T W BEASTALL

IAN CARTER, *Farm Life in Northeast Scotland 1840–1914*. John Donald, Edinburgh. 1979. xiv + 258 pp. £12.50.

Scottish rural history is deficient in regional studies. One is all the more surprised, therefore, to find a study of a major province, the north-east, that not only takes an in-depth look at its rural society during a fairly brief phase of change, or 1840–1914, but does so in a way that is both radical and challenging. Put simply, Ian Carter's text is concerned with the demise of the north-east peasantry over the Victorian period and is framed in explicitly Marxist terms. After being dominated for so long by empirical work, Scottish rural history has a need for interpretative studies and Carter's book certainly falls into this category. However, not all scholars will respond warmly to its blend of 'muckle farmers' and 'twal owsen ploos' on the one hand, and class fractions and relations of production on the other.

The book is divided into seven chapters. The first sets out the background to the problem, with a brief discussion of the north-east's physical endowment, its experience of the Improvers' Movement and what Carter terms the 'new social formation' or the social groups created by the Improvers' Movement. It is at this point that he introduces the main *dramatis personae* of his argument, the large, capitalist 'muckle farmers' and the smaller peasant landholder or crofter. These are put forward as class fractions, each with its own material basis of production. Chapter 2 explores how the relationship between the capitalist farmer and the peasant altered between 1840 and 1870. During this period, Carter sees the 'muckle farmers' as becoming more capitalist in their behaviour. Not only were their ranks penetrated by merchant and speculative capital but the rise of the cattle trade from the 1820s onwards gave them a firm and lucrative market role. Peasant farmers, meanwhile, were still able to reproduce themselves as a class. They were able to do so because landowners encouraged the reclamation of waste by the peasantry on favourable terms, a process that spawned extra smallholdings. At the same time, the small farmers were able to discharge the role of stock breeders for the larger capitalist farmers who concentrated on fattening. Reciprocity between the two class fractions was extended further by the peasant family shedding surplus labour and its employment as hired labour by the 'muckle farmers'. Following 1870, these conditions changed. Landowners no longer sought to have extra land colonized, Irish and Canadian stock were increasingly substituted for local leanstock, whilst mechanization led to capital being substituted for labour. By 1914, Carter pronounces the north-east peasantry as dead, as no longer a reproducible class.

Subsequent chapters embroider this basic theme by looking at other aspects. Thus, chapter 4 considers the life and conditions of those who inhabited the bothies, chaumers and cottar-touns, covering everything from

the daily cycle of labour to the inadequate and sometimes scandalous conditions of the bothy. Chapter 5 explores the social conflict between farmers and their hired labour, tensions which naturally varied from the homely family systems of the peasant farm or cottar toun to the stark alienation of the bothy system. A feature of Carter's discussion here is the use made of bothy ballads as a source of contemporary attitudes and feelings. A recurring message throughout the book is that changes between 1840 and 1914 were changes in the relationship between class fractions and reflect the success or failure of such fractions to represent their class interests. Carter maintains that the demise of the north-east peasantry by 1914 occurred because they failed to represent their class interests and that this must be seen as a political problem. He reviews their lack of political consciousness in chapter 6, a chapter in which the peasant's abortive flirtation with the Liberal party and their inability to acquire the substantive legal rights of the crofter are seen as critical. Rather like a bottle of claret that has been poorly decanted and whose last glass is clouded, the last chapter of the book touches the reviewer's palate as slightly tart and of a lesser vintage. It hastily — if effectively — reviews the main theme of the book, chides Edinburgh-based scholars for trying to fit the variety of Scottish rural history into a single mould, and then rounds off the book with a call to his fellow-sociologists to follow his path and look at how the various class fractions in rural society have fared over time and at who exactly owns what. Parts — if only parts — seem more a ferment of questionable asides than considered viewpoint: this is a pity for the book as a whole has much to commend it.

Given the book's Marxist approach, many readers are likely to react unfavourably against what Carter has written. But as he himself implies, and as I would be prepared to accept, the dependence of the Scottish rural historian on large estate paper collections (some of which are still in private hands) has tended, on occasion, to produce much intellectual bowing and doffing of the cap, and there is a place for a more independent, less reverential approach. Besides, his play on social relationships and conflict (as opposed to the purely economic or agrarian dimensions of the problem) is an underworked theme north of the Border. But these more contentious sides of the book apart, readers will still find a great deal of straightforward and well-thought-out agrarian history, a history written with insight and no lack of warmth for the problem. It displays not only sensitivity for the everyday life and struggles of the north-east peasantry but a fine regard for its subtle variations from one locality to another.

ROBERT A DODGSHON

HOWARD NEWBY, *Green and Pleasant Land? Social Change in Rural England*. Hutchinson. 1979. 302 pp. 6 tables. Cartoons by Thelwell. £8.95.

This is not primarily a work of history — nor would the author wish it to be regarded as such. It is rather a study of rural England as it exists today which uses historical material to show the processes of change. It draws extensively on published sources and particularly on Newby's previous works, *The Deferential Worker* and *Property, Paternalism and Power*.

The central thesis is that the English countryside today is a long way removed from the popular and somewhat idyllic image cherished and, at least part believed in, both by those who live in the towns and those who live in the country. Rural England appears to some to be threatened by urban people and urban pressures; in fact it is also very much threatened by the people who earn their living from it, and who 'by the relentless pursuit of Mammon' through ever more intensive farming methods are placing the environment and landscape in jeopardy.

Newby is at pains to show the reality of the countryside today; what sort of place it is, what sort of people live there, what sort of pressures it is really subjected to and what historical processes have brought it to its present state. In the course of his journey he debunks many popular misconceptions which are avidly perpetuated by contemporary authors. Two examples will suffice. The tied cottage has been described as 'feudal' and as 'legalized serfdom', where, as in fact, 'it is a quite recent development of mid-Victorian agriculture, following on from the decline of farm service and the disappearance of itinerant agricultural gangs' (p 137). A second example is the loss of agricultural land of which some 76,000 acres a year go to non-agricultural uses. In stressing that half of this goes to forestry, he comments that 'it seems less pedantic to insist that forestry is no more than a highly specialised . . . type of agriculture' (p 28). He goes on to stress that the rate of transfer of agricultural land to urban is actually one-third less today than in the 1930s.

There is a discerning analysis of the current state of the English village and of the conflict between the 'traditional' inhabitants and the incomers. Newby finds that it is the incomers who wish to maintain the status quo. They, 'like to see farm workers around the village since this serves as a reminder that they do indeed live in a "truly rural" village as opposed to a kind of rustic suburbia' (p 170). He traces the history of the 'squalor of rural housing' for farm workers since the mid-nineteenth century and the strong feelings which council housing developments — or rather the lack of them — generated in the 'twenties and 'thirties (p 179 et seq). He attributes the lack of public housing in rural areas between the wars to the domination of landlords and farmers on local councils who wanted to keep the rates down. Even since the last war this situation has

continued for, on the eve of local government reorganization in 1974, rural district councils provided only 20 per cent of rural housing stock as against 31 per cent elsewhere so that farm workers were becoming increasingly dependent on tied cottages and other rural workers were faced with a declining pool of privately rented housing (p 185). Conversely, planning controls on rural housing have become — in effect, if not in intent — instruments of social exclusivity. 'For example, the insistence of planning authorities upon the use of certain building materials, the standards of design and external finish and the density of housing development reflect their traditional concern with how a house or a village looks rather than who will actually live in it' (p 187). It might seem that the transfer of power from the Big House to the County Hall and as Newby puts it, 'on, in many cases, to Whitehall' (p 195), has removed control over village affairs even further away from the community but Newby is quick to point out that it would be a fallacy to believe that these changes do not necessarily mean 'that the interests of farmers and landowners are no longer dominant in rural society' (p 196).

If it is easy to sympathize with many of the author's generalizations, it is not always possible to agree with the route by which he reaches them. On p 122 he writes 'it is easy to forget that the majority of those who work in agriculture are neither landowners nor farmers but farmworkers'. Table 5 (p 123) shows the number of regular whole-time workers (excluding family) in 1975 as 144,400. To this one might add 41,400 regular part-time workers, making a total of 185,000. Table 3 (p 79) gives the total number of agricultural holdings (presumably full- and part-time) as 208,600 in 1974, so that it could be argued that there are more full-time and part-time farmers than full- and part-time farm workers. The point at issue is Newby's contention that the farm workers are the least considered section of farming population, with which it is difficult to disagree; but it would hardly be correct to include family workers within that group since they might be presumed to share the benefits of their parents.

Newby gives us a timely reminder of the meaninglessness of continuing an 'urban versus rural' concept of society. 'The mere fact that such a large proportion of the population now works in towns is illustrative of this, but any of the social changes which have affected the everyday life of the countryside cannot easily be fitted into a rural-urban dichotomy. Important developments like the spread of education, the rise of the welfare state, the influence of the mass media and even the increasing rationalization of agriculture itself reflect not so much the influence of urban or rural ways of life, but of the *national* upon the *local* (p 240).

Overall the book provides a penetrating analysis of the state of rural society. Additionally it provides a welcome guide to the jungle of rural legislation

developed in the last fifty years. As a sociologist's view of the development and functioning of the institutions of English rural life it could be read with advantage, by agricultural historians of all periods.

JOHN HIGGS

GRAEME QUICK and WESLEY BUCHELE, *The Grain Harvesters*. American Society of Agricultural Engineers, PO Box 410, St Joseph, Michigan 49085, USA. 1979. 269 pp. Illus. No price stated. A book upon a special subject must not be frowned upon if it is restricted to the choice of its authors. Harvesting and cleaning a crop is but one facet of its production although it is the final result of a season's work, and maybe of a longer period of preparation of the seedbed. Harvesting is always a tricky business and aforesaid occupied several weeks in winning the harvest, and the best part of a winter in threshing and dressing the grain. Verily in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread was a ponderous but irrefragable truism, much as the process has been changed.

Messrs Quick and Buchele have traced the story from the primitive ages, when food was collected one way or another from the wild herbage that surrounded the isolated dwellings of primitive man, to the modern world of machinery. The book is copiously illustrated but unfortunately the pictures are not numbered, although many of them are supplied with comprehensive captions.

It would be rather over-emphatic for me here to go through the ages as these authors, one of them an Australian and the other American, have done, but something must be said about their treatment of the progress of events which have led to the modern mechanized process of harvesting. One thing that mechanization has done is to reduce the process of harvesting from a lengthy duration of some weeks of exacting and exhausting work to a few days' work by two or three men, a combine harvester and a truck or two. To these may perhaps be added a drying plant and the necessary silos for the storage of the grain.

The job was not always so simple, as everyone knows who has taken part in haymaking or grain harvesting. There is an argument amongst the

archaeologists about the countries (or areas) where grain was first cultivated and gathered other than by the collection of wild herbage, but this need not detain us here. The authors deal with the Middle East and Egypt in a rather cursory but quite constructive manner, though their story becomes rather confused with the Roman and Middle Ages; but then the tools used to cut the corn and thresh it were fairly similar throughout the handicraft age; I find the fourteenth-century illustration of the *pik en hak* very instructive: I was not aware that it was so ancient.

Of course the Roman *Vallus* is carefully discussed with all the most recent pronouncements about it, and this part of the story may be regarded as conclusive, whence it jumps to the eighteenth century, not of course without some illustration of the intervening centuries and a chapter on the *Society for the encouragement of Arts, manufactures and commerce* whose influence and premiums did so much to encourage the development of ideas about agricultural technique in the eighteenth century. This chapter discusses the early types of reaper, the inventions of a variety of people, including Bell, whose efforts are rather better known than most of the other aspirants to fame. This is followed by a chapter entitled 'Who invented the reaper?', a controversy by no means new and widely discussed in earlier literature.

After reaping comes threshing, and so the authors revert to primitive times and provide a detailed discussion of the process from the time when the hortative not to muzzle the ox which treads out the corn was good advice. The various apparatus worked manually or by animal power, if only treading, are capably described, but it is of course in the eighteenth century that the foundations of modern technology were laid. Steam power by traction engines urged on the process, and the invention of the petrol-driven tractor much more, but it would be tedious to follow the process in detail here.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries occupy a major part of the book, and there are recondite passages on the gathering of such crops as the soya bean. The bibliography is exhaustive. This is a study thoroughly to be recommended to historians and other interested parties. A very well worthwhile piece of work, but limited to one phase of the farming year, possibly the final and most important one.

G E FUSSELL

Shorter Notices

N J G POUNDS, *An Historical Geography of Europe 1500–1840*. CUP. 1980. xvi, 438 pp. Maps, diagrams. £17.50.

The writer of a text which deals with so big a subject over so long a period faces a major problem of exposition. Professor Pounds' solution is to begin and end with two broad 'horizontal' chapters surveying Europe in the early sixteenth century and on the eve of the industrial revolution respectively; and to have five 'vertical' chapters in between, giving in turn overviews of the development of population, cities, agriculture, manufacturing and mining, and trade. As in his earlier volume dealing with 450 BC to AD 1330, the British Isles and Russia are omitted except for passing references. The result is a book which, as the author remarks, for the most part 'looks remarkably like economic history'. The chapter on agriculture includes statistical material from a wide range of sources, but inevitably most of these are so localized (and possibly untypical) as not to throw much light on the dimensions of general trends. The book is nevertheless a remarkable achievement in assembling and interpreting a very large body of material, and has been written in so lucid and readable a form that it will undoubtedly be for many years a standard text and invaluable work of reference.

G E MINGAY

JOHN LOWERSON, *A Short History of Sussex*. Dawson, Folkestone. 1980. 214 pp. £10.

This is a readable, accurate and comprehensive history of Sussex from the earliest times to the present day, a book that will serve as a useful introduction to the county's history for students at many different levels. The author's own research interests are in the Victorian period, but he has mastered a mass of published material on earlier times and has presented it lucidly and concisely.

The publishers claim that 'John Lowerson has avoided an approach which focuses on buildings and landscapes and has sought to write the more elusive history of the people of the area', but in practice this distinction is hard to maintain. On the first page of chapter one we read that, 'The one uniting feature is the Sussex landscape'; later, new towns and lost villages are mapped, Wealden hammer ponds explained, the 'Great Rebuilding' has a separate section devoted to it, and so on. It would have been better to have recognized that the landscape approach can form an integral part of social history; that being so, the

book would have had a much wider appeal if illustrations had been provided to match the attractive cover.

DAVID HEY

JOHN BURNETT, *A Social History of Housing 1815–1970*. Methuen. 1978. viii + 344 pp. Illus. £5.95 paperback.

This valuable general work on the history of housing gives special emphasis to the factors influencing supply and demand, notably population growth, changes in family size and levels of incomes. The balance of the book is inevitably on the urban side, although two chapters are devoted to rural housing before 1914. However, in the third section of the book, dealing with the period 1918–70, the country housing problem drops out of sight. For the nineteenth century the book provides a useful overview, and brings out well the diversity of cottage homes, their size, construction, defects, and rents, and the problems of generalizing about them. We still need a definitive study of the rural side of housing history.

G E MINGAY

JEAN ROBIN, *Elmdon. Continuity and change in a north-west Essex village 1861–1964*. Cambridge University Press. 1980. xxxiv + 260 pp. Illus. £15.

This book is concerned with the structure of society in a small Essex village and the way that it changed over the course of a century. The size of families, the importance of kinship networks, and the experiences of the various occupational groupings are exhaustively examined. Some of the findings will be familiar to students of rural history — for example, the relatively low geographical mobility of those employed as farm workers in the parish, and the discovery that it was the young people who were most likely to migrate, with girls (entering domestic service) tending to leave at an earlier age than their brothers. Nevertheless, it is valuable to have this development fully documented for one community. The many statistical tables are of particular interest, and there are several useful case studies of long-established families, with the ups and downs in their fortunes carefully recorded. The book will provide a valuable source for both historians and sociologists. However, by its very nature it is unable to set its findings, in any significant fashion, against a broader national or regional background. The account

is also rather flat. One does not get much 'feel' of what life was like for the villagers concerned. Such matters as poor relief (save for a brief mention of Saffron Walden workhouse), medical care, and law and order (including problems of poaching) are neglected.

But Jean Robin's book has many merits and can be recommended confidently to students of nineteenth- and twentieth-century village life. It has a companion volume, *Kinship at the Core*, which considers the nature of community in Elmton from an anthropologist's viewpoint.

PAMELA HORN

JOY PARR, *Labouring Children*. Croom Helm. 1980. 181 pp. Illus, tables. £11.95.

This short book is concerned with the emigration of working-class children to rural Canada during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most came from an urban background and their home environment is examined in some detail, together with the motives and methods of the emigration societies who organized their removal. For the agricultural historian, the book's main interest will lie in the chapters describing the children's life in Canada. The hardships of their situation are emphasized, though the author concludes that as adults they were likely to secure better jobs than they would have done had they remained in Britain.

The survey provides an interesting insight into a little-known aspect of social history. However, students of rural life are likely to find the analysis of the children's experiences on Canadian farmsteads inadequate. In this connection, it would have been valuable to have had more details of the conditions imposed in the apprenticeship indentures, since these seem to have formed a major part of the emigration societies' attempts to protect their young charges from exploitation.

PAMELA HORN

SIR JOSEPH HUTCHINSON AND A C OWERS, *Change and Innovation in Norfolk Farming*. Published for the Norfolk Agricultural Station by Packard Publishers Ltd. 1980. 72 pp. No price stated.

This slim book records the history of the Norfolk Agricultural Station, from its start in the 1880s as a series of experimental plots through its fifty years at Church Farm, Sprowston, to its present position at Manor Farm, Morley, between Wymondham and Attleborough. It was created, and has been sustained, by Norfolk farmers and landowners, though financial help has been obtained from the Development Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture. For thirty-five years from 1924 the Station was directed by Frank Rayns, while Lord Hastings was chairman of the executive committee from 1912 to his death in 1956. These two redoubtable men worked closely with the agricultural scientists at Cambridge, successively Professor T B Wood, Sir John Hammond, Sir Frank Engledow, and Sir Joseph Hutchinson from the School of Agriculture, and with the staffs of the Plant Breeding Institute and the National Institute for Agricultural Botany. But the Station never lost touch with the Norfolk farmers and with the need to demonstrate practices that were not only technically sound but also financially profitable. Rayns at Sprowston pioneered the production of sugar beet in this country, the use of tops and pulp for fodder in place of the traditional turnips, the selection of pure lines of crop seeds, and many other techniques which later became common. He also trained many men who made careers in the National Agricultural Advisory Service; when he retired in 1960, six of the eleven directors of the experimental husbandry farms had been members of his staff. It is useful to have this brief and clear record of the work of some notable men who actively promoted the agricultural revolution of the twentieth century, when science was fully brought into farming practice.

EDITH H WHETHAM

NOTES AND COMMENTS

(continued from page 41)

THESES IN AGRARIAN HISTORY

Dr Raine Morgan of the Institute of Agricultural History of the University of Reading has prepared a comprehensive bibliography of higher degree theses on British agrarian history, 1876-1978. The bibliography, with introduction, is to be published this spring jointly by the Society and the Institute. Copies are available to members at £2.50, including postage, and can be ordered on the form inserted into this issue of the *Review*. It will also be on general sale, price £3.50 including postage.

THE THREAT TO THE HISTORIC RURAL LANDSCAPE

A day conference on the theme 'The Threat to the Historic Rural Landscape' is to be held on Saturday 21 March 1981, at the Fortress House Lecture Theatre, Savile Row, London W1. Details and booking forms are available from Dr R N Millman, Secretary, Historic Landscapes Steering Group, Department of Geography, Polytechnic of North London, 383 Holloway Road, London N7 ORN.

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THE BRITISH AGRICULTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Articles and correspondence relating to editorial matter for the *Agricultural History Review*, and books for review, should be sent to Professor G E Mingay, Editor, *Agricultural History Review*, Rutherford College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent.

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The AGRICULTURAL HISTORY REVIEW



VOLUME 29 1981

PART II

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The Influence of Demographic Factors on the Position of the Agricultural Labourer
in England and Wales, c1750–1914

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Lifleasehold in the Western Counties of England 1650–1750

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The Influence of Demographic Factors on the Position of the Agricultural Labourer in England and Wales, c1750–1914¹

By W A ARMSTRONG

I

MANY years have elapsed since the standard histories of the agricultural labourer first saw the light of day, and they are decidedly outdated.² It is true, several valuable contributions seeking to examine aspects of the labourer's position have appeared in academic journals and elsewhere, written by scholars with a specialist knowledge of agrarian or demographic change.³ Yet until they are satisfactorily integrated, popular impressions will continue to be shaped by writers who follow the tradition, set by the Hammonds, of giving excessive emphasis to institutional influences and concentrating upon colourful episodes such as the Swing riots which seem capable of being explained to a large extent by short-period influences. Innocently or not, such historians serve to cloud rather than illuminate the underlying factors affecting the situation of the labourer, by neglecting or misinterpreting the more fundamental economic, technological and especially the demographic determinants of his standard of life and position in society. The object of this article is to assert the importance of the last-mentioned factor; it will commence with an assessment of the demographic forces at work and proceed to analyse some of the implications which follow from them.

II

In their eagerness to dramatize the process of urbanization, historians frequently fail to emphasize sufficiently the absolute growth of numbers in the countryside. If we accept Chalklin's estimate that, in 1750, 25 per cent of the population of England and Wales lived in towns, we are left with 4.7m persons in the countryside.⁴ By 1901 the percentage of the total population living in the newly designated rural districts stood at only 23 per cent, but absolutely had reached 7.5m. Alternatively, if we take 16 counties identified by Deane and Cole as primarily agricultural in 1811, their aggregate population rose from 1.96m in 1750 to 6.5m in 1901.⁵ Whether we should think in terms of a doubling or trebling of the rural population over this one-hundred-and-fifty-year period depends upon questions of definition. But its growth was indisputably substantial and the rates of natural increase which obtained in the countryside were faster still. We may begin with the changes on the side of mortality and fertility which supported them.

The eighteenth-century population theorist, Richard Short, estimated the characteristic mortality levels of great towns to be 43–53 deaths per thousand at risk; in moderate towns 36–42; and in country villages 20–5.⁶ Similar urban-rural contrasts were attested to time and again in early Victorian England and, leaving aside the famous comparison made by Edwin

¹Based on a paper read to the British Agricultural History Society's annual winter conference, December 1977.

²Eg W Hasbach, *History of the English Agricultural Labourer*, 1908; F E Green, *A History of the English Agricultural Labourer, 1870–1920*, 1920; J L and B Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, 1911.

³In particular the works of Chambers and Mingay, Jones, Anderson, Collins, and Hunt, cited below.

⁴C W Chalklin, *The Provincial Towns of Georgian England*, 1974, p 17.

⁵P Deane and W A Cole, *British Economic Growth, 1688–1959*, Cambridge, 1962, p 103; B R Mitchell and P Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, Cambridge, 1962, p 20.

⁶Various works, quoted in T R Malthus, *Essay on the Principle of Population*, Everyman edn, 1914, II, p 241.

Chadwick between Manchester and Rutland, even the normal level of mortality in urban sanitary districts was estimated by William Farr to be one-quarter higher than in their rural counterparts in the decade 1851–61.⁷ When we encounter, in the period 1848–54, crude death rates as low as 20 (Blofield), 19 (Romney Marsh, Cranbrook), 17 (Hendon, New Forest), 16 (Builth, Bootle in Cumberland), and even 15 (Glendale),⁸ it seems clear that the levels of mortality ruling in rural areas had fallen significantly below those of the distant past, even if this was due to the disappearance of the towering peaks of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century mortality rather than to a major reduction of the general plateau. Moreover, there is no reason to think that the agricultural labourers had failed to share in this favourable development. It is true, there remained much ill-health amongst them, and that their record of morbidity, as evidenced by the 1846–48 statistics of the Manchester Unity, was bettered by a good many other occupational categories; indeed it represented an ‘aggregate sickness’ 6.2 per cent greater than the experience of the rural districts taken as a whole. Nevertheless, their expectation of life at various ages, according to the same source, was 45 years at 20, 30 years at 40 and 16 years at 60, a record which was surpassed only by carpenters among 25 occupational categories considered, and which represented marginally better survival ratios than those of rural members in general.⁹ This comparatively favourable experience of mortality was enjoyed through the remaining period considered here. As Dr Horn has pointed out, during the 1880s death rates among

agricultural labourers stood at only 66 per cent of age-standardized mortality among all adult males, whilst in the 1890s mortality from tuberculosis (the greatest single killer during the nineteenth century) reached only 62 per cent of standard levels.¹⁰ Likewise infant mortality in farm workers’ families was considerably below that of any other class of manual workers. In 1911 when the level stood at 125 per thousand at risk nationally, and at 172, 147, 161, 162, and 139 respectively among the offspring of dock labourers, carters, bargees, coachmen, and bricklayers’ labourers, the corresponding figure for agricultural labourers was 97.¹¹

With respect to marriage and fertility the position is less clear-cut. There was a common presumption among contemporaries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that the usual age at marriage of labourers and their wives was falling as a consequence of the decline of living in, and the corrosive influence of the Old Poor Law. In point of fact there is no agreement in existing demographic studies that any such systematic variation occurred, but, as it happens, the hypothesis of rising levels of fertility in rural areas does not require it. Rather, an increase in crude rates is likely to have come about as a consequence of changes in the social configuration of rural society.¹² Against the background of a stationary or indeed slightly declining number of holdings, the long-term fall in the death rate inexorably produced a higher proportion of landless labourers, a trend by no means peculiar to England and Wales. If, as seems likely, they had at all times tended to marry a little earlier than farmers (and to slightly younger women), structural shift alone would have had some

⁷A F Weber, *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1963, p 355.

⁸E H Greenhow, *Papers Relating to the Sanitary State of the People of England*, 1858, pp 162–4.

⁹H Ratcliffe, *Observations on the Rate of Mortality and Sickness existing among Friendly Societies*, Manchester, 1850, p 50. NB Although agricultural labourers were not represented in the Manchester Unity in proportion to their numbers in the working population, nevertheless the 18,000 upon whose experience these statistics are based was the largest single occupational group to come within Ratcliffe’s purview.

¹⁰P Horn, *Labouring Life in the Victorian Countryside*, 1976, pp 182–3.

¹¹Registrar-General for England and Wales, *74th Ann Rept*, BPP 1912–13 XI, pp xli, xliii, 73–87.

¹²The potential importance of structural shifts in affecting crude rates is brought out in H J Habbakuk, *Population Growth and Economic Development*, Leicester, 1971, pp 40–3. However, he supposes that ‘the intersectoral shifts which were of critical importance were those from agriculture to industry’.

impact on crude birth rates in the countryside. Some useful calculations have been made on the basis of data showing the proportions ever married at the census of 1861. Dr Anderson has compared primarily agricultural registration districts where more than 75 and less than 45 per cent of the workforce consisted of labourers, and finds the mean age at marriage to have been lower by 1.9 years (for males) and 1.8 years (females) in the former. Even a structural shift involving only 20 per cent of the farm labour force, he estimates, could have produced as many as 6 per cent more births per marriage cohort.¹³ It is thus likely that structural change acting on the average age at marriage and thereby on fertility, played some part, at the margin, in promoting rural population growth in the century before 1861.

In contrast to older views, this argument assumes a high degree of stability in patterns of marriage and procreation. At any rate for the second half of the nineteenth century definite signs of behavioural inertia among agricultural labourers may be inferred from the findings of the 1911 Census, which reviewed the completed fertility of all marriages still extant.¹⁴ It is true, the average age at which agricultural labourers' wives were married rose, in conformity with the national trend, from 22.2 (1861-71) to 24.9 (1906-11). But their marital fertility declined comparatively sluggishly. Comparing the completed fertility of marriages of the pre-1851 era with those celebrated in 1881-86, the extent of the national decline was 21 per cent, and of the Registrar-General's Social Class I, 43 per cent.¹⁵ Since that of the agricultural labourers sank by only 15 per cent, it may be said to have been *rising* relative to that of other social groups. Moreover, because of the

relatively low levels of child mortality ruling among agricultural labourers, the effective size of their families remained distinctly on the high side. Table 1 illustrates these features.

TABLE 1
Children Born and Children Surviving to
Marriages of Various Dates:
Ratios for Agricultural Labourers to
Corresponding Rates for All Classes Jointly

Marriages of	Children born	Children surviving
1851-61	105	111
1861-71	104	111
1871-81	109	116
1881-86	114	122
1886-91	114	122
1891-96	115	122
1896-1901	114	119
1901-06	114	118
1906-11	114	116

Source: *Census of England and Wales, 1911, XIII.*

Fertility of Marriage, Pt II, p xc.

A further aspect of late nineteenth-century fertility is equally remarkable, and again, indicative of behavioural inertia. Dr Hunt has used the 1911 data to demonstrate that there was no sign of any significant relationship between fertility and the relative levels of money wages in rural areas, which suggests strongly that the birth rate was not responsive to market forces. Age-standardized fertility was higher in the rural districts of every Welsh and English county than for the average of England and Wales as a whole. He comments: 'This uncalled-for increase in the supply of labour imposed strain on all rural economies, most of all in the rural south where wages were lowest.'¹⁶

Given the size of the gap between fertility and mortality levels throughout the period considered here, rates of natural increase in rural areas were always considerable. It may be borne in mind that even a 1 per cent annual

¹³M Anderson, 'Marriage Patterns in Victorian Britain: An Analysis based on Registration District Data for England and Wales, 1861', *Jour Family History*, I, 1976, pp 65, 76.

¹⁴*Census of England and Wales, 1911, XIII. Fertility of Marriage, Pt II, 1923.* NB That the earlier the period of the marriage, the fewer that remained available for the purpose of the enquiry.

¹⁵J W Innes, *Class Fertility Trends in England and Wales, 1876-1934*, Princeton, 1938, p 42. See Table XIII.

¹⁶E H Hunt, *Regional Wage Variations in Britain, 1850-1914*, Oxford, 1973, pp 232-7.

rate of increase will, on the principle of compound interest, double the population in 70 years, or, over 160 years, raise it by some 600 per cent. That the population increases in rural areas, whilst very appreciable, were of nothing like this order of magnitude was attributable to regular losses by migration.

The dimensions of the outflow prior to the advent of civil registration in 1837 remain to be properly assessed, although Deane and Cole calculated that the 16 primarily agricultural counties lost, on a net basis, some 36 per cent of their estimated natural increase between 1701 and 1831.¹⁷ However, disregarding scattered and localized instances, there are no signs of systematic absolute decreases in rural areas until a much later date, and it is well-known that the agricultural labour force reached its all-time peak at or about 1851. By this date the census had much improved and the era of civil registration had begun, so that it is possible to chart in more detail the drift from the countryside as a whole, and out of agricultural employment in particular. Summarizing the conclusions of some recent authors we find that:

(a) At the county level the losses were unspectacular. Only three English counties (Cornwall, Huntingdon, Rutland), and three Welsh (Cardigan, Montgomery, Radnor) showed absolute decreases between 1841 and 1911. However, such calculations mask the factor of urban concentration within counties, so that in Norfolk, the aggregate population of Norwich, Yarmouth and King's Lynn grew by 20.6 per cent and that of the remainder fell by 2 per cent.

(b) The statistics relating to over 600 registration districts are more revealing. The aggregate population of what Cairncross describes as the rural residual districts rose by 18 per cent in the north, 9 per cent in the south, between 1841 and 1911. But their net losses by migration had been considerable, amounting to some 79 per cent of calculated

inter-censal increases (births minus deaths), or, in effect, 1.6m persons from the northern, and 2.9m from the southern districts over the period.

(c) Concurrently, the number of agricultural labourers sank absolutely, falling about 23 per cent from its mid-nineteenth-century peak by 1911.¹⁸

Such summary statistics do not tell us everything we might wish to know about the nature of the migratory flows. Few, if any, occupational groups stood to gain more than farm labourers from emigration to foreign parts, or to the colonies. Yet modern research suggests that they were distinctly under-represented among emigrants from the United Kingdom. Agricultural labourers had some opportunities to avail themselves of publicly assisted schemes of the kind sponsored by the Poor Law Commissioners and bodies such as the Colonial Commissioners during the late 1830s, 1840s and 1850s. But America took by far the greater proportion of all United Kingdom emigrants on a private basis, and it would seem unlikely that many of these were farm labourers. During the 1870s the first successful trade unions in this field were making vigorous attempts to promote emigration on the presumption that the bargaining power of those who remained would be enhanced. In some individual villages quite dramatic effluxes occurred.¹⁹ Yet for various reasons the policy was not pursued with vigour into the 1880s when, paradoxically, the rate of migration from rural areas was running at its peak. In the light of recent work by Professor Erickson it appears that Cairncross may have erred in supposing that this decade was marked by

¹⁸ Mitchell and Deane, *op cit*, pp 20-2, 24-5; A K Cairncross, *Home and Foreign Investment*, Cambridge, 1953, p 78; F D W Taylor, 'United Kingdom: Numbers in Agriculture', *Farm Economist*, VIII, 1955, p 39. See also J Saville, *Rural Depopulation in England and Wales, 1851-1951*, 1957; and R Lawton, 'Rural Depopulation in England and Wales' in D Mills, ed, *English Rural Communities: The Impact of a Specialized Economy*, 1973.

¹⁹ P Horn, 'Agricultural Unionism and Emigration', *Hist Jour*, XLVI, 1972, pp 89-99.

¹⁷ Deane and Cole, *op cit*, p 108.

extensive direct transference of rural labourers to foreign parts, since the evidence of American shipping lists indicates that townsmen overwhelmingly predominated among emigrants from the United Kingdom.²⁰ From the perspective adopted here these distinctions are relatively unimportant. The direct effect of the loss of manpower upon the agricultural labour market was similar regardless of whether it was occasioned by overseas emigration, movement to the towns (which predominated at all times), or even permanent shifts of occupation without corresponding residential inobility.

The last demographic factor to be considered here was very directly affected by migratory flows, that is, the composition of the remaining population by sex and by age. Long ago Ravenstein announced as his seventh law of migration that females were more migratory than males, at least over short distances, a fact which obviously related to the easy assimilation of country girls into urban domestic service.²¹ This is consistent with the evidence of the 1911 Census which gives a ratio of 1087 females per 1000 males in urban districts and 1001:1000 in their rural counterparts. The contrast is often much more striking when individual towns and their rural environs are compared. In the case of York in 1851 the sex ratio was 1138 females to 1000 males in the Municipal Borough; 924:1000 in the rural residue of York Registration District.²²

The effect of migration on the pattern of age-distribution is more complex. On the evidence of the 1911 Census there was a comparative dearth of males aged 20–44 in rural areas; consequently the proportion of

males aged under 20 and over 45 was higher in the countryside than in the towns. In particular, the relatively high proportion of elderly persons attracted comment. Some years earlier, Charles Booth pointed out that according to the 1881 Census there were 28 persons per 1000 aged over 65 in urban districts and 53 per cent more (ie 43 per 1000) in rural districts, which he attributed to longer life expectation in the country and the habit of retirement to rural areas, but above all to the effects of age-selective migration from the countryside, deemed 'by far the greatest of the causes'.²³ Of course, these figures relate to rural populations as a whole, but all the indications are that the agricultural labourers corresponded to the pattern. From the 1891 Census it may be ascertained that elderly workers (ie those aged 55 and over) were approximately three times as numerous, as a proportion, in the farm labour force than among railway employees or coal-miners. Table 2 shows the comparative deficiency of men aged 20–44, those who had acquired the skills of the farm work and were still in the physical prime of life.

TABLE 2
Age Composition of the Male Labour Force
Aged 10 and Upwards,
England and Wales, 1891

	Percentage aged					
	–20	20–4	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–
A. Agric labs, farm servants, shepherds	28.0	11.9	16.8	12.7	11.9	18.6
B. Remainder of male occupied population	19.8	13.6	23.6	18.1	12.9	11.7
C. % by which A exceeds B	+41	–14	–29	–30	–8	+59

Source: Based on BPP 1893–94 CVI. 1891 Census, England and Wales. Ages, etc. Abstract. Table 5, pages x–xxv.

²⁰C Erickson, 'Who were the English and Scots Emigrants to the United States in the late Nineteenth Century?' in D V Glass and R Revell (eds) *Population and Social Change*, 1972, pp 359–60. However, Dr Erickson has no way of knowing to what extent these urban points of origin were temporary staging posts.

²¹E C Ravenstein, 'The Laws of Migration', *Jour Stat Soc*, XXXXVIII, 1885, pp 196–9.

²²W A Armstrong, 'The Social Structure of York, 1841–51', Birmingham University PhD thesis, 1967, Appendix, Table E6.

²³R.C. on Aged Poor, Mins of Evidence, Vol III. BPP 1895 V [C. 9684–II], p 587.

Changes in the age-sex composition characterizing rural areas and the farm labour force may have had some significant implications for labour productivity;²⁴ it is certain that they had a profound demographic influence, for, as a consequence of the shortage of young married adults, *crude* fertility rates had diminished, according to Cairncross, to 24 per 1000 in the northern rural residual districts and 23 in the south, by the first years of the twentieth century.²⁵ This does not signify that the families of those who remained were becoming much smaller. Indeed, as we have seen, in a relative sense they were becoming larger. Rowntree and Kendall pointed out that the ratio of children aged 0–14 enumerated in 1901 to married women was much as 20 per cent higher in rural than in urban districts.²⁶

III

Most historians tend to treat population as a derivative of economic and social change, and the latest series of articles attempting to link agrarian and demographic change in England and Wales are no exception to this general rule.²⁷ In the analysis which follows, population changes of the kind just described are taken as given, and their consequences are explored. This is by no means an inappropriate standpoint when we bear in mind that population growth was general in Europe. Nor is it in any way unconventional, since it accords closely with the position often adopted by present-day economists and

sociologists when they address the development problems of the third world. Lastly, it is not claimed as an original perspective. Whilst, hitherto, no-one has attempted to trace the influence of demographic factors across the lengthy time-period taken in this article, Professors Chambers and Mingay drew attention to the 'great upswing in population' as a cause of rural poverty in the early nineteenth century and later in their work acknowledged the impact of the rate of migration from rural areas on wage levels. Likewise, Professor Jones recognized migration as the major factor working to improve the farm worker's position once the overall size of the agricultural labour force began to fall.²⁸ It is convenient to take the year 1850 (before which the agricultural labour force was rising, and after which it fell), to divide the period 1750–1914 into two phases, manageable within the constraints of an article. Whilst each obviously contained very distinctive sub-periods, such an arrangement is best suited to the present purpose of surveying the significance of long-run demographic influences on the labourer's situation.

IV

The abiding impression drawn from the first period (c1750–1850) is of an extraordinary regional and even local variety of standards and experiences. From the mid-eighteenth century down to the French wars such evidence as we have shows little sign of advancing real wages among labourers even in the rural environs of London, whilst in parts of the south (notably the south-west) wage increases may not have kept pace with prices.²⁹ On the other hand northern wages, which in the past had tended to be lower,

²⁴On this controversy see E H Hunt, 'Labour Productivity in English Agriculture, 1850–1914', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, XX, 1967, and the critical comments on his work by D Metcalfe and P A David in *ibid*, XXII, 1969 and XIII, 1970.

²⁵Cairncross, *op cit*, p 82.

²⁶B S Rowntree and M Kendall, *How the Labourer Lives*, 1913, p 34.

²⁷G Philpott, 'Enclosure and Population Growth in Eighteenth Century England', *Explor Econ Hist*, XII, 1975, pp 29–46 and M Turner, 'Parliamentary Enclosure and Population Change in England, 1750–1830', *ibid*, XIII, 1976, pp 463–8. Philpott contends that enclosure improved animal and thereby human health, and Turner criticizes his methodology and use of sources.

²⁸J D Chambers and G E Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750–1880*, 1966, pp 102–3, 186–9; E L Jones, 'The Agricultural Labour Market in England, 1793–1872', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, XVII, 1964, pp 329–32.

²⁹E Gilboy, *Wages in Eighteenth Century England*, Cambridge, Mass, 1934, pp 53, 56, 59, 130–1.

were from the 1770s showing definite signs of advance. The data founded by Bowley on wage-statements culled from Eden's *State of the Poor* suggests that by 1795 those counties later designated by Caird as 'northern' had already gained about a 19 per cent advantage,³⁰ and the reason is not far to seek. Evidence from the *General Views* of agriculture, notably those of Lancashire, Staffordshire and South Wales, attests to the significance of competition for labour from collieries, ironworks, lime-kilns, and canals as a factor affecting wages. The emerging 'north-south' differential was still more apparent by the mid-century, and was then estimated by Caird at 37 per cent.³¹ Whilst it was not demographic in origin the contrast reflected the emergence of a different balance in the supply of and demand for labour in agriculture, favourable in general to the northern counties.

The impact of the French wars upon the position of the labourer was complex and the hardships imposed by soaring prices in years of acute difficulty such as 1795, 1800-01 and 1812 should not be minimized. But it would appear that a 96 per cent advance in Gazette wheat prices between 1788-92 and 1810-14 was nearly matched by a 92 per cent increase in money wages, so that, as Professor Flinn concludes, it is not clear that any significant change in real wage-rates occurred either way during the period. Professor Jones goes further, arguing that real wages in agriculture actually rose during the war years.³² It seems likely that he had in mind not real wage-rates but real earnings, for we have numerous indications that the labourers were more fully employed than hitherto, raising the probability that their harvest earnings rose disproportionately. 'In the dear times they were then fully employed', commented a

Cambridgeshire contribution to the 1816 *Report on the Agricultural State of the Kingdom*.³³ Moreover the times were conducive to the extension of female and juvenile employment, especially at peak seasons. It is likely that this preceded the war years to some extent as a consequence of the cultivation of more root crops, whilst with the diminution of hand-spinning some of the traditional alternatives were already disappearing. Be that as it may, any such development can hardly fail to have been reinforced by a quasi-demographic factor, namely the absence of many men on military service. Dr Collins has estimated that the number of enlisted men rose from less than 100,000 in 1792 to 345,000 in 1802 and 465,000 (a figure equivalent to more than one-fifth of the male population aged 15-49 of England and Wales) in 1811.³⁴ Although many were drawn from the Highlands and from Ireland, a thinning of the ranks of agricultural labourers can hardly fail to have created more opportunities for females, and thereby to have raised gross family incomes.

In 1814-16 the agricultural industry passed from prosperity to extreme depression. Faced with falling prices farmers naturally looked to retrench and felt obliged to reduce their staffs just as huge numbers were being disgorged from the armed forces. It is true, the worst shock effects of peace were a passing phase, but the expansiveness of farmers as a body was never quite the same again through the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s. If demobilization had a once and for all effect, the remorseless pressure of rural population growth, hitherto masked by wartime conditions, came to exercise an unmistakable and baneful influence on the employment situation. These were the years when it came to be supposed, correctly, that the southern counties, at least, were afflicted with a grave

³⁰ A L Bowley, *Wages in the United Kingdom*, Cambridge, 1900. This calculation is based on the 1795 column of the table of weekly wages facing p 144.

³¹ J Caird, *English Agriculture in 1850-51*, 1852, p 516.

³² Mitchell and Deane, op cit, p 488; M W Flinn, 'Trends in Real Wages, 1750-1850', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, XXVII, 1974, pp 407-8; Jones, op cit, p 324.

³³ Board of Agriculture, *The Agricultural State of the Kingdom, 1816*, Bath, 1970 edn, p 42. See also pp 148, 229 for similar references from Leicestershire and Northamptonshire.

³⁴ E J T Collins, 'Harvest Technology and Labour Supply in Britain, 1790-1870', Nottingham University PhD thesis, 1970, p 155.

problem of 'surplus population', the nature of which was grasped clearly enough by Lord Melbourne: 'The evil is in numbers and the sort of competition that ensues.'³⁵ It revealed itself most clearly in acute winter unemployment, the details of which, for the most severely affected areas in the worst years, were brought together forty years ago by Professor Gash.³⁶ Against this gloomy background a trend to falling money wages might be expected; it is clearly in evidence in Bowley's statistics and in Dr Richardson's study of wages paid on individual estates across a wide area.³⁷ It is true, prices also were in secular decline, reflected in the cost of living indices for the period. The juxtaposition of the series then available caused Sir John Clapham to argue, optimistically, that the real wages of agricultural labourers advanced during the 1820s and 1830s.³⁸ There may be a parallel here with the situation a hundred years later, for it is now a commonplace observation in texts covering the inter-war years that those still in regular work secured significant advances in real wages. All the same, it would be difficult to represent these years as a time of broad-based advance in rural welfare. Too many men were either unemployed or under-employed, and the times were no longer propitious for extensive family participation, since there was a sense that adult males had a prior claim on what work there was. It is surely significant that these years witnessed the two major outbreaks of rural discontent in 1816 and 1830;³⁹ and no less so, in view of

what has been said about the importance of regional differences in supply of and demand for labour, that the northern and midland counties remained largely immune from the disturbances.

Taking fair advantage of hindsight, Dr Collins has detected the first signs of a drying-up of the labour surplus from as early as the mid-1830s, with corn output set on a rising trend and industry, especially railway building, exercising a vigorous pull on labour.⁴⁰ In fact the years down to 1850 are exceedingly complex with much variation from year to year and between different districts. Suffice it to say that in the later 1840s, with the labour force climbing to its zenith, the first of our two long periods closed on a sombre and cheerless note, with low prices following in the immediate wake of the Repeal of the Corn Laws and widespread reports of wage reductions and shortages of work.

Across the period so far considered, the labourer's living standard varied greatly from one region to another, and over time. Overall, so far as any averaging concept has value, it is difficult to see it advancing or declining significantly in an absolute sense. What seems incontestable is that the situation of the labourers, in general, was declining relative to that of the other agrarian classes, that is, landlords and farmers. This view derives some support from the work by Deane and Cole on factor shares in agriculture. Their statistics, which are expressed in money rather than real terms, exhibit an overall increase in rents and profits of some £17.3 million between 1801 and 1851, allocable among (we may safely presume) a stationary or even slightly declining number of claimants; whilst labour's share increased by only £13.7m, distributed among what was quite certainly a rapidly increasing body of

³⁵J L and B Hammond, op cit, 1978 edn, p 240; and see the editor's introduction, p xiv.

³⁶N Gash, 'Rural Unemployment, 1815-34', *Econ Hist Rev*, 1st ser, VI, 1935.

³⁷Bowley, op cit, table facing p 144; Mitchell and Deane, op cit, p 349; T L Richardson, 'The Standard of Living Controversy 1790-1840, with Special Reference to Agricultural Labourers in Seven English Counties', Hull University PhD thesis, 1977, chs 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17.

³⁸See the graph in J H Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain*, I, Cambridge, 2nd edn, 1930, p 128.

³⁹The most recent investigations of these events are A J Peacock, *Bread or Blood*, 1965, and E J Hobsbawm and G Rudé, *Captain Swing*, 1969.

⁴⁰Collins, op cit, pp 179-80; and see his article, 'Harvest Technology and Labour Supply in Britain, 1790-1870', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, XXII, 1969, p 467.

workers.⁴¹ This accords with what one would expect according to the laws of demand and supply, and in the factors influencing the supply side, demographic circumstances apparently played a dominant role in accounting not only for the relative depression of the labourers' living standards, but also, in some measure, for the important regional variations.

Such a conclusion would doubtless fail to meet with universal assent. For example, Professors Hobshawm and Rudé, in *Captain Swing*, devote only half a page to population, blame the failure of employment to rise at a commensurate rate, and assert that 'it was not human biology but human society which created the surplus labour in the countryside'.⁴² Yet the institutional factors traditionally cited as primary influences upon rural population growth and on the position of the labourer in general carry less and less conviction. Modern research shows little if any sign of the much-vaunted demographic consequences of the Old Poor Law, with Professor Tucker finding no significant positive correlation between the 1821 census fertility ratios by county and levels of per capita poor expenditure over the period 1817-21.⁴³ Within the county of Kent an examination of 17 parishes gives no warrant for the view that the allowance system operated as a significant inducement to marriages and births. Rather, Dr Huzel is inclined to argue that far from being a catalyst to population increase, the allowance system was a response to it, citing with approval the opinion of Professor Chambers that, at most, the Old Poor Law caused 'only a mere eddy

on the surface of the demographic tide'.⁴⁴ This is not to suggest that the workings of the Poor Law did not colour social relationships, but it should fall into place as a consequential or secondary factor, just as the adoption of a hard-faced attitude to the rural poor on the part of many squires and overseers probably reflected their inability to perceive the nature of the forces in train, rather than the capture of their minds by a new set of *laissez-faire* principles, as historians such as E P Thompson and Harold Perkin believe.⁴⁵

Likewise the impact of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century enclosures has been grossly exaggerated in the past. In practice, as Gonner and Chambers showed, they were compatible with increases in the size of the farm labour force, and certainly not associated with rural depopulation.⁴⁶ Moreover those historians who lay stress on the loss of common rights have scarcely, if ever, asked themselves what would have been the consequences of rural population growth whatever benefits had been derived from the commons in the past. It must surely have implied either increasing proportions excluded from those rights, or, had universal access been allowed to the burgeoning class of labourers, a marked deterioration in the quality of grazing which was, in many cases, already poor. Recent studies give further

⁴¹ Deane and Cole, *op cit*, pp 152, 166. Note though, that landlords may well have benefited more than farmers from high wartime prices; whilst the absolute level of farm profits rose, the rate of return on the capital they employed only occasionally reached 14 per cent. This is the conclusion of G Hueckel, 'English Farming Profits during the Napoleonic Wars', *Explor Econ Hist*, XIII, 1976, pp 342-3, after consulting the records of nine farms.

⁴² Hobshawm and Rudé, *op cit*, pp 42-3.

⁴³ G S L Tucker, 'The Old Poor Law Revisited', *Explor Econ Hist*, XII, 1975, pp 239-40.

⁴⁴ J P Huxel, 'The Demographic Impact of the Old Poor Law: More Reflections on Malthus'. Unpublished paper, pp 28-30. (Forthcoming in *Econ Hist Review*.)

⁴⁵ E P Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 1963, pp 218-20; H J Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 1969, pp 184-7.

⁴⁶ E C K Gonner, *Common Land and Inclosure*, 1912, pp 396-447; J D Chambers, 'Enclosure and Labour Supply in the Industrial Revolution', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, V, 1953, pp 332-3, 339-40. Two recent theoretical studies have argued that the appearance of a higher labour-land ratio following enclosure does not mean that the change was labour-intensive in the economist's sense, but do not query the increasing aggregate level of farm employment in the period. See B D Baack and R P Thomas, 'The Enclosure Movement and the Supply of Labour during the Industrial Revolution', *Jour Eur Econ Hist*, III, 1974, pp 401-23 and N F R Crafts, 'Enclosure and Labour Supply Revisited', *Explor Econ Hist*, XV, 1978, pp 172-83.

support to the revisionist view of the social consequences of enclosure. Professor Tucker concedes that in the western counties, where pastoral farming predominated, enclosure was associated with 'a lingering element of social distress' which tended to inflate per capita relief in 1817-21; but in the predominantly arable east, where such outlays were in general higher, there was actually a significantly *negative* relationship with the percentage of land enclosed between 1761 and 1821.⁴⁷ Most recently, after going thoroughly through a mass of literature, Dr Yelling has concluded that although the impact of enclosure on population varied in individual parishes, its general effect was far from catastrophic; that its impact on the poor rates was not the main cause of their increase; and that most common-field townships already had a comparatively restricted pattern of ownership and common rights by the end of the eighteenth century if not indeed well before.⁴⁸ The frailty of the alternative institutional arguments leave a void which the demographic case neatly occupies.

V

In the years after 1850 the agricultural labour force began to shrink; the ratio of agricultural employees to farmers and graziers fell from 5.1 in 1851 to 2.9 in 1901.⁴⁹ Explanations of the trend have sometimes been sought in a theory of technological displacement, which, in the eyes of some historians, played a role complementary to that of enclosure in the previous generation. As Hasbach put it, 'What the intensive application of capital in agriculture effects . . . under conditions of free competition and tenant farming, is economy of labour in general'.⁵⁰ The theory has some superficial attractions. Save for the notorious case of the threshing machine, mechanization had hitherto made little impact on English

agriculture, and sowing machines in the 1850s and 1860s, the steam tractor from the 1870s and the self-binding reaper from the 1880s have to be reckoned with. Yet all these innovations had notorious drawbacks in use, and although it is possible to trace localized references to labour displacement in, for example, the material gathered for the Royal Commission on Labour (of 1893), there are also many suggestions that implements were being introduced on account of labour shortages, rather than as a means to enable workpeople to be dispensed with. Surveying the evidence as a whole W C Little was inclined to think that the reduction of farm staffs was a consequence rather than the cause of migration from the land.⁵¹ However, it is probable that increasing mechanization did tend to depress gross family earnings at harvest-time. Indicatively, it was reported that on account of 'the perfection of machinery', harvests in Wiltshire could be secured 'in as many days as it used to take weeks', given good weather; and that harvest earnings instead of being from £6 to £8, were considered good at £3.⁵²

If, as this suggests, the chief impact of mechanization was to reduce the level of dependence on casual labour in peak seasons, the weekly wages of the adult male labourer need not have been much affected. But it is clear that they continued to be very much influenced by the demographic factors which played so important a role in regulating the supply of labour. For the years down to 1870 (when his article terminates), we find Professor Jones arguing for a very gradual shift in the labourer's favour as the expansion of demand associated with the developments of the 'Golden Age' of agriculture began to overtake a supply which was beginning to contract. Admittedly, this was more obvious at some points than others, but there are

⁴⁷Tucker, *op cit*, pp 242-4.

⁴⁸J A Yelling, *Common Field and Enclosure in England, 1450-1850*, 1977, pp 226-8.

⁴⁹Derived from Taylor, *op cit*, pp 38-9.

⁵⁰Hasbach, *op cit*, p 258.

⁵¹R.C. on Labour. *The Agricultural Labourer*, vol V(I), *General Report*. BPP 1893-4 XXXVII — Pt II [C. 6894-XXV], p 40.

⁵²*Ibid*, vol I (II), *Report of C M Chapman*, BPP 1893-4 XXXVII — Pt II [C. 6894-II], p 46.

many signs, which he has documented, of changing attitudes to the labourer's welfare and of more vigorous philanthropic activity.⁵³ His contention that farm wages were directly influenced by the volume of migration has recently received valuable support from Dr Hunt's studies, which, at the county level, show that (in marked contrast to the relationship between wages and fertility), migration losses were linked with wage levels. Correlation coefficients of 0.47 and 0.33 emerge when the net migratory flows of 1871-91 and 1891-1911 are related to, respectively, farm earnings in 1867-70 and 1898. Migration thus harmonized to some extent with the pattern of wage differentials and is likely to have contributed significantly to their erosion. Of course, this is not to say that they disappeared. Indeed, so strong and deep-seated were the underlying regional forces affecting the market demand for agricultural labour that in 1907 the maximum wage still exceeded the minimum by some 28 per cent. However, in 1867-70 the corresponding figure had been 44 per cent.⁵⁴

Taken overall, the Bowley index of earnings in agriculture averaged 90 in 1860-66 and reached 117 during 1873-77 (1891 = 100).⁵⁵ It subsequently fell back noticeably but in 1890-96 still stood at 100, which means, when we bear in mind the falling cost of living during the later nineteenth century, that an appreciable increase in real wages had occurred. This cannot have been offset fully by decreased family earnings at harvest time nor even by the probable set-back to real wages which, in common with many other substantial sections of the working class, was the experience of most agricultural labourers in the years after 1900.⁵⁶ Moreover in the later nineteenth

century the position of the labourers no longer tended to deteriorate (as clearly it had in our first period) relative to the other elements of agrarian society. Indeed, according to the statistics given by Deane and Cole, labour's share of income from the 'depressed' agricultural sector tended to run at a slightly higher level during the second half of the nineteenth century, peaking in 1881 (40.2 per cent). The 1901 figure (38.8 per cent) remained above those derived from any of the eight observations covering the period 1801-71.⁵⁷

Needless to say these faint traces of a relative improvement pale into insignificance when the immense social differences still evident in English rural society are borne in mind. In many ways it is much more pertinent to compare the situation of the agricultural labourers with that of other elements in the working class. On the one hand, it is clear that their standard of life improved significantly between the 1850s and 1900, if not thereafter, and that migration had operated in such a way as to affect the relationship of demand and supply advantageously. On the other, it is just as apparent that their welfare, especially in the southern counties, trailed badly, and in many respects more obviously than ever, behind the progress of the working classes as a whole. According to Bellerby, the ratio between the average industrial and agricultural wage remained of the order of 2:1 in 1911-14.⁵⁸ Nor did this tell the whole story. Bienefeld has drawn attention to the reduction of hours in some trades and manufacturing industries from as

between 1900 and 1912, retail prices rose by 16 per cent; that after 1907 real earnings in the better paid counties were increasing but elsewhere they were not; and that overall, the real earnings of some 60 per cent of ordinary agricultural labourers decreased after 1907.

⁵⁷ Deane and Cole, *op cit*, pp 152, 166. Unfortunately it is not possible to quote a figure for 1911.

⁵⁸ J R Bellerby, 'The Distribution of Farm Income in the United Kingdom, 1867-1938', *Proc Agric Econ Soc*, X, 1953, quoted in Saville, *op cit*, p 13. Note also that in 1901, the share of labour in mining, manufacturing and dealing was 48.1 per cent and in trade and transport 46.5. (Deane and Cole, *loc cit*.)

⁵³ Jones, *op cit*, p 330-5.

⁵⁴ Hunt, *Regional Wage Variations*, pp 58-9, 244-5, 248.

⁵⁵ Bowley's national index is reprinted in Mitchell and Deane, *op cit*. See p 350.

⁵⁶ Land Enquiry Committee, *The Land*, I, 1913, pp 9, 11-12. It is suggested that whilst wages rose by 5 per cent

early as the 1850s, and to a general re-adjustment in 1872-74, whilst about 1880 a working week of some 54-56 hours became the norm.⁵⁹ By the Edwardian period the Saturday half-holiday was almost universal in towns. The case of the farm labourer was different. Partly on account of the nature of the work, the hours he was obliged to put in had been left at a decidedly higher level. Half-holidays were exceptional, stockmen could not avoid Sunday duties, and in two-thirds of the villages surveyed by the Land Enquiry Committee the usual hours of work, even outside the harvest period, were 10 a day, corresponding to 60 a week and often more. It was, according to a Lincolnshire labourer, 'the constant grind, month in and out, with never an hour to call their own' that the labourers increasingly resented.⁶⁰ Here we should recall that, on their modest wages, secured by dint of what were coming to be regarded as abnormal hours of labour, farm workers had a family of above-average size to maintain.

It would appear that, in the period after 1850, demographic factors continued to exert a powerful influence on the agricultural labourer's standard of life. They go far to explain the absolute increases that were won (through migration); the surviving regional differentials; and, in some measure, the disadvantages which, as a class, the labourers continued to suffer through their comparatively high marital fertility. Against this background of relative deprivation we need scarcely wonder at the frequency of contemporary comments concerning the labourer's 'want of outlook'; or at reading that a Northumbrian hind's daughter would consider that she had bettered herself by marrying *anyone* not connected with farm employment; or at learning that 'the girls would look at a boy in Ipswich on a Saturday

night, find out that he was a farm labourer, and then stop looking sharp'.⁶¹

VI

The point of view set out here carries what some would consider Malthusian overtones. However, the problem has not been approached as an exercise in arranging historical facts in such a way as to illustrate and justify a position rooted in a set of dogmatic theoretical principles. Nor should an implicit approval of Malthusian prescriptions (chiefly, the advocacy of a stringent poor law and a greater recourse to 'moral restraint') be read into the argument. In point of fact the demographic forces which so profoundly influenced the supply of labour and hence the worker's standard of life, as well as the low level of esteem in which he was held, were scarcely comprehended during most of the period considered by landlords, farmers and least of all by the labourers themselves. Even if they had been, it is difficult to envisage any sequence of development other than that traced in these pages. To analyse the position of the labourer in such terms may seem mechanistic and indeed somewhat fatalistic. Yet the demographic approach seems to have considerably more explanatory value than the usual alternatives which argue intuitively from harrowing individual cases; or which proceed from Marxist assumptions about class;⁶² or which, in the characteristic style of our times, seek to impute the blame for the labourer's misfortunes to such a safe but elusive target as society in the round.

1972 edn, p 100. The second reference, from a farm worker and trade unionist, refers to 'the old days', probably the inter-war period.

⁶² In case this point should be misunderstood it is worth stressing that the existence of vast social differences in rural society and even 'labour consciousness' is not in question. What is much more doubtful is whether the mass of the labourers were imbued with 'class consciousness' in the Marxist sense, leading them to perceive their interests as fundamentally opposed to their employers, and to seek to engage in 'class conflict'. In a word, they were unlikely to be guided by any acquaintance with either Marx or Malthus!

⁵⁹ M A Benefield, *Working Hours in British Industry*, 1972, pp 82, 106, 122.

⁶⁰ Land Enquiry Committee, *op cit*, pp 15-16.

⁶¹ R.C. on Labour, vol I (III). Report of A W Fox, BPP 1983-4 XXXV [C. 6894-III], p 103; R Blythe, *Akenfield*,

Lifeleasehold in the Western Counties of England 1650–1750

By CHRISTOPHER CLAY

I

IT is well known to historians of English rural society in this period that the form of lease by which landlords in the western part of the kingdom let their estates differed markedly from that which was normal elsewhere. In the east and the Midlands, if landlords granted leases at all (and many preferred annual tenancies), they almost invariably conveyed to the tenant the right to occupy the land for a fixed number of years which in normal circumstances did not exceed twenty-one. Also they almost invariably charged a rack rent, that is a sum equivalent to the full annual value of the land. West of the Pennines, however, and of a swathe of country extending south from the Peak District, through the middle Thames valley to the Solent, estate owners tended to eschew both annual tenancies and leases for terms of years in favour of lifeleasehold. Under this system tenants were expected to purchase their tenancies by payment of lump sums known as fines. Thereafter they rendered only a small annual rent representing a mere fraction of what their land was worth, and described variously as a reserved rent, lord's rent, chief rent, head rent, old rent, or conventional rent, according to district. In some limited areas, for instance in parts of Lancashire and Cheshire, and on most of the estates belonging to the Church, leases were for the lives of three named individuals, but in most of the region it was normal for leases to be granted for 99 years (or occasionally some shorter terms such as 60 years) determinable upon three lives. These two forms of leasehold were different in some technical respects which lawyers regarded as important, but for the purposes of this article they may

be regarded as identical. Together with copyhold for lives they were often known by the generic name of 'lifeholds'.¹

II

So much may be familiar enough, but should an enquirer be curious to know more about the lifehold system he will find that little enough has been written about it, least of all with reference to the period now under discussion.

Typically the lives named in western copyhold grants or leases were those of the tenant himself, his wife, and his eldest son, or of himself and of two children, and the system provided a means whereby the countryman could buy a life time's security for himself and his immediate dependants. At an earlier period leases for three lives were reckoned to be equivalent to leases for 21 years, and it is possible that in practice they were. However, as a result of improvements in life expectancy, there is no doubt that by the second half of the seventeenth century, if allowed to run their full length three life leases lasted considerably longer. Contemporaries were well aware of this. A manual published in 1663 argued that they were, on average, equivalent to leases of 33 years, or at the very lowest reckoning 27. And in the same year a Lancashire landlord, whose predecessor had granted fresh three life leases to 49 tenants in 1632–33, consulted his records and discovered that only one had yet fallen in and that in five cases all three lives were still in

¹For some discussion of lifeleasehold in the century or so before 1640 see L Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558–1641*, Oxford, 1965, pp 307–22; also E Kerridge, *Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After*, 1969, esp ch 2.

being.² Not only did life leases last longer than those for years which prevailed in the east, but in practice they established hereditary tenancies since it was customary for landlords to allow automatic renewals. Indeed, in most districts where they prevailed, the final expiry of leases for lives or 99 years determinable upon lives was somewhat unusual. The normal practice was for each life to be 'renewed' upon payment of the appropriate fine when, or soon after, it had 'dropped', and only if a leaseholder was utterly unable to afford the fine, or had no heirs to succeed him, would he fail to keep his lease 'filled up'. Landlords were generally anxious that they should do this, for it kept their income from fines as steady as possible. Some of them actually inserted a clause into their leases obliging the lessees to renew as each life dropped: in the case of the Mostyn estate at Beeston and Peckfarton (Cheshire) they were to do so within twelve months if the landlord required it (1746).³ If a tenant was unwilling or unable to renew, or to do so on the landlord's terms, then the latter could secure a fine nevertheless by selling a reversionary lease to someone else. In practice, therefore, most of the fines owners received were for renewals of one or two lives rather than for the grant of fresh leases. Of course it was always open to them to refuse renewals so that their grants would eventually expire and the holdings fall back into hand, enabling them to reorganize their farms unhampered by any tenant right, or to re-let them on different terms. In practice, during most of the period, this was most commonly done by landlords who wished to convert copyhold tenure for lives into leasehold for 99 years determinable upon lives, but otherwise (as we shall see) was relatively unusual.⁴

Along the broad frontier separating the area of tenancies for years and rack rents from that

of lives and fines there were inevitably districts, for instance in the west Midlands and the central south, where the two forms of tenancy were found side by side, different estates or even different manors on the same estate adhering to different systems. Nor was the division of the country into two zones of tenancy of very long standing in the later seventeenth century, for it had only come into existence as a result of changes which were still in progress in the middle of the century. Rack rents and relatively short lettings had always been commoner in the east than the west, but in the mid-sixteenth century leases for lives and for long terms of years (30, 40, or even 60) had still been quite usual and the practice of taking fines was widespread. Lease terms had tended to get shorter as the century wore on, and by the end of Elizabeth's reign rarely exceeded 21 years, but the shift to rack rents came later and may not have got fully underway until the generation before the Civil War.⁵ Landlords who took fines were obtaining an advance payment of rent, or to look at it in another way were selling their tenants annuities, in the form of the income that their farms could be expected to yield, for the terms of their leases. Either way the calculation of the fine had to take account of the interest that would otherwise have accrued to the tenant on his capital, the advantage of which was to pass to the landlord, and at compound rates this inevitably cost the latter dear. How much he sacrificed, and how much the tenant gained from a transaction of this type, an example will make clear.

Let us compare the gross yield to the landowner from two farms, both worth £50 a year, one leased for two successive terms of 21 years, the other leased for 99 years determinable upon lives. We shall assume for the sake of simplicity that land values remained stable, and that the lives named in the lease 'dropped' at nine-year intervals. At the end of the first

²H Phillippes, *The Purchaser's Pattern*, 1663, pp 21-3; T E Gibson (ed), *A Cavalier's Note Book*, 1880, pp 144-5.

³Univ College N Wales Library, Mostyn 6088, 6090: particulars of Beeston and Peckfarton, 1746.

⁴See below pp 85-7, 90-1.

⁵*The Agrarian History of England and Wales* IV, Cambridge, 1967, pp 686-7. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, pp 320-1.

21-year period the landlord would have received, if the farm were well tenanted, $\pounds 50 \times 21 = \pounds 1050$, from the rack rented holding. The calculation for the other holding is inevitably a little more involved, and we must make some further assumptions. Let us suppose that the reserved rent was $\pounds 1\ 10s\ 0d$; that the lease was sold initially for thirteen times its net value to the lessee, ie the rack rent value of the farm less the reserved rent or $\pounds 48\ 10s\ 0d$; and that fresh lives were inserted into the lease to replace the dead ones at two years' purchase on each occasion.⁶ After 21 years the property would have yielded $\pounds 1\ 10s\ 0d \times 21 = \pounds 31\ 10s\ 0d$, plus $\pounds 48\ 10s\ 0d \times 13 = \pounds 630\ 10s\ 0d$, plus 2 ($\pounds 48\ 10s\ 0d \times 2$) = $\pounds 194$,⁷ altogether $\pounds 856$. Up to this point the difference in the gross return from the two forms of letting was only $\pounds 194$, significant not inordinate and, as we shall see, probably considerably less in net terms. In the second period of 21 years, however, the difference would be very much greater, for the first farm would again produce $\pounds 1050$ whilst the second would yield only $\pounds 1\ 10s\ 0d \times 21 = \pounds 31\ 10s\ 0d$, plus 2 ($\pounds 48\ 10s\ 0d \times 2$) = $\pounds 194$,⁸ which comes to no more than $\pounds 225\ 10s\ 0d$.⁹

A landowner who could afford to allow his outstanding leases to expire without taking any fines for renewing them would, therefore, in the medium term, benefit very largely from a change to rack rents; and the longer his leases had been for, and the larger the proportion of the value he had formerly taken in the form of fines, the more he would gain. A further advantage would be a more regular income, and if his estate had been leased for lives, above all a more predictable one. For if he had depended heavily on fines forthcoming upon the death of his tenants, it was inevitable that his receipts would fluctuate from year to year, and the random

chances of life and death ensured that fluctuations would sometimes be enormous. Thus on the estates of Lord Petre in Devonshire, Somerset and Gloucestershire, which were let almost entirely for 99 years determinable upon lives, receipts averaged $\pounds 2243$ a year between 1689 and 1710, but varied from as little as $\pounds 1189\ 5s\ 9d$ in 1694 to as much as $\pounds 3800\ 3s\ 10\frac{1}{2}d$ three years later.¹⁰ Nevertheless there was a financial penalty to be paid in the short term for getting rid of fines, and the very circumstances in which the long-term benefits were greatest were those in which this penalty would be heaviest. For where a high proportion of the value of leased holdings had been taken in the form of fines, a decision to forego them would, for a period, leave the landowner with only very low reserved rents by way of income from the majority of his farms, and it might be many years before enough of the old leases expired to offset this. This seems to have been one of the reasons why in the north-west, along the Welsh border, and above all in the south-western peninsula, little progress was made in converting beneficial leases to rack rent tenancies in the seventeenth century, or indeed in the first half of the eighteenth either, for the custom in these districts was for almost the whole value of a letting to be taken as fine. On Lord Poulett's manors in Devonshire in 1700 rents varied from as little as one shilling (for a holding with an improved value of $\pounds 3$ per annum) to $\pounds 2\ 19s\ 0d$ (for one worth $\pounds 26$ per annum). One farm worth $\pounds 60$ a year yielded only $10s\ 3d$ in rent. On another estate in the same county consisting of the manors of Potheridge, Dolton, and Cherubere, in 1690 1225 acres of land were valued at $\pounds 585\ 10s\ 0d$ but actually paid a mere $\pounds 33\ 0s\ 10d$ per annum in rent.¹¹ Outside the south-west a higher ratio of rent to fine was not infrequently found, but throughout the western part of the country the balance was

⁶For the assumptions in this calculation, see below p 89.

⁷ie for renewal fines in years 9 and 18.

⁸ie for renewal fines in years 27 and 36.

⁹Technically interest at the legal rate ought to be allowed to the landlord on the money paid to him in fines, but to do this would be unrealistic since fines were almost invariably treated by their recipients as income and not as capital.

¹⁰BL, Add MS 28251, fol 369.

¹¹Somerset RO, DD/PT/box 46: survey of Poulett lands in Devon, 1700. Northants RO, Grafton MSS G 2954: survey of Potheridge, Dolton, and Cherubere, 1690.

invariably heavily tilted towards the latter. By contrast in the east midlands, the south-east, and the eastern counties, fines had commonly represented only a small part of it, and sometimes were little more than a supplement to an almost fully economic rent. Thus on the four remaining farms on his huge Essex estate for which Lord Petre still took fines in the 1650s, the reserved rents amounted to £458 10s 0d per annum and the fines together totalled only £560. In respect of lands at Ashwellthorpe (Norfolk) in 1644 Sir Thomas Knyvett instructed his wife to demand 'a year & halfe valewe' of one tenant, whilst for another he decreed that 'a gentle yeers profit shall satisfy'.¹² On such properties it was correspondingly easier to dispense with fines, and hardly any owners continued to demand them by the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Curiously the depression of agricultural prices in the later seventeenth century, and the resultant fall in land values, which undoubtedly contributed to the preservation of the fining system further west, was probably what finally brought it to an end in the east. For where fines were small in relation to annual rents, if landlords were faced by the needs to reduce the total rent they demanded from their tenants, the first concession they would be inclined to make would be to waive the former.

A second relevant consideration is that where fining was practised only on a minority of holdings, or even where the two systems existed side by side in roughly equal proportions, there would be many owners who had property let on beneficial terms, but who also had other holdings let on rack rents. Such people could much more often afford to allow their beneficial tenancies to expire than those without this alternative form of income, although they did not necessarily avail themselves of their opportunity. Thus, once it had been accepted by the gentry that they would be better off with rack rents, there was

no major obstacle in the way of change. But where the fining system was all but universal, and lettings by landlords at rack rents almost unknown, there would be few of them who did not depend upon the periodic receipt of fines for meeting inescapable financial commitments. Moreover those few would include very large landowners who derived the bulk of their income from outside the region, but whose financial strength was frequently matched by lack of interest in their outlying properties. They would also include moneyed purchasers with sources of income or reserves of capital entirely independent of land ownership, and who could greatly increase the rate of return from their acquisitions if they allowed outstanding beneficial leases to expire. However, in most of the western third of the country, as in other distant parts of the kingdom, the volume of purchases by men of this type seems to have been much lower in the mid and later seventeenth century than it had been earlier.

By or soon after the Restoration fining and beneficial leases had virtually disappeared in eastern England, and had given a good deal of ground in the Midlands and central south, but in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the change-over to rack rents seems to have lost force. The ending of the great inflation, and the succession of agricultural depressions which characterized this period, made very long lease terms appear more attractive to landlords than they had done in the early seventeenth century. Likewise the balance of financial advantage between fines and rack rents was less clear cut once receipts from the latter began to fall in the wake of mounting arrears, bankrupt tenants, empty farms, and irresistible pressure from tenants for rebates and reductions. In difficult times the purchasers of beneficial leases might sometimes be unable to pay the fines they had bargained for, at least by the agreed date, but usually they would manage, by borrowing if necessary, and thereafter the landlord would have no further financial anxieties on account of the farms in question for a long time to

¹² Essex RO, D/DP E26, ff 55, 59, 63, 67v. B Schofield (ed), *The Knyvett Letters (1620-1649)*, 1949, p 142.

come. His reserved rents were unlikely to fall into arrears, however bad conditions became, save perhaps on large and inefficiently run estates belonging to absentees whose agents simply did not bother to collect them for years at a time. This was because the tenants would lose the holdings for which they had fined if they did not pay, and anyway the amounts involved were not large in relation to the earning capacity of their farms. If a tenant wished to give up his farm or went bankrupt it need be of no great concern to the landlord, for the lease would be sold and the purchaser would assume responsibility for the annual rent. In the late seventeenth century there may, therefore, have been some revival of fining on some estates in districts where it had not yet become extinct. Acute agricultural depression in the 1680s, and the consequent difficulties he encountered in maintaining the level of remittances from the property under his care, made Sir Stephen Fox's agent at Redlynch (Somerset) advise his master to convert rack rent tenancies to beneficial leases. 'I wish', he wrote, 'your estate here was every foot sett, which would be both easy and profitable for you.' Fox did little in that respect in Somerset, but on his large Wiltshire estate which was already largely out on lives he changed the form of tenancy on four out of the nine rack rented holdings between 1682 and 1685.¹³

Two other features of beneficial leases made them relatively attractive at this time compared to other forms of tenure: they invariably imposed upon the tenant full responsibility for repairs and maintenance, and they freed the landlord from liability to pay parliamentary taxes which in the case of rack rent tenancies was almost inescapably his. The issue of repairs always provided an argument for leaving small farms out on lives, for the cost was disproportionately heavy on these, but it must have assumed greater importance in the eyes of landlords than it had

had formerly when the generally upward movement of landed incomes finally came to an end with the Civil War. And there is no doubt whatsoever that the matter of taxes acquired a significance it had never had before, first in the 1640s and 1650s, and then again with the advent of the land tax at four shillings in the pound in 1692. In 1710 the chief agent to the Duke of Newcastle wrote to inform his employer that he had leased out some farms on beneficial terms which had formerly been let on rack rents, and explained that 'This method will excuse your Grace from what you abhor, I mean Taxes and repairs, and will ensure the succeeding rent beyond all fadventure.'¹⁴ Land tax was levied at less than the full four shilling rate for almost the whole of the period from 1713 to 1739, and indeed was often at only one or two shillings. The 1740s, however, saw the return of wartime taxation, and this coinciding with yet another bout of severe agricultural depression in many areas, apparently once again made beneficial leases appear more attractive than rack rents to some landowners. In 1740 the prospect of the Russell estate having to assume responsibility for taxes and repairs was enough for one of the Duke of Bedford's stewards to advise against proceeding with a scheme for getting rid of beneficial leases on group of farms near Bridport in Dorset. And on the Duke of Kingston's estate some tenancies which had formerly been on lives but had been converted to rack rent lettings, were once again leased for lives at this time. At Bradford-on-Avon (Wilts) it was not until 1765 that the duke resumed the policy of getting rid of leases for lives.¹⁵

III

The fines paid by tenants upon the grant or renewal of lifeholds were arrived at by nego-

¹³Dorset RO, D 124. Estate. Somerset (box 173): Thomas Allen to Sir S Fox, last July 1682. C Clay, *Public Finance and Private Wealth*, Oxford, 1978, pp 204-5.

¹⁴Nottingham Univ Library, PW 2/279: P Walter to Duke of Newcastle, 4 Oct 1710.

¹⁵Beds RO, Russell MSS R3/15: Andrew Way to Robert Butcher, 12 April 1740. G E Mingay, 'The Agricultural Depression, 1730-1750', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd Ser VIII, 1955-56, pp 329-30.

tiation between them and their landlord, and the first and most important step in the process was an agreement between the two parties on what the holding in question was really worth. On a small estate in the hands of a resident landowner the truth of the matter would be well known to the proprietor, or it would be relatively easy for him to ascertain it. However on large estates, or on estates owned by absentees who took little interest in them, it was quite otherwise, especially in districts where several holdings held by distinct leases (and perhaps from more than one owner) were cultivated as a single unit. A survey, or even a proper inspection, of each holding every time it came up for renewal was generally out of the question on grounds of expense, and in practice, at least in the south-west, owners and their agents arrived at valuations 'by book'. In other words they turned to their estate records, to their manorial 'surveys' which set out the name of each holding, the lives by which it was held, the quit rent and other dues its tenant owed, and a note of renewal fines paid in the past, but usually no more economic information than a rough estimate of its acreage and a value in round figures. Compilation of these surveys was an immense task, and though on well run estates they might be revised once every twenty or thirty years, on others (and probably more commonly) this was neglected. The Lords Petre, for instance, had left their property in Devonshire and Somerset largely unattended for generations until in 1714 the agent there wrote in desperation 'there has been no general survey or valuation taken of the Western Estate for above 100 years last past, and . . . the old survey books themselves are very imperfect in several essential particulars, there being no value at all upon many estates, and others are found to have two values, and those so different that no useful judgement can be made of them'. As a result, he continued, 'there is no foundation or grounds at present for a steward to go upon to sell any one estate so that he can answer it either to himself or his

Trust for what he does'. Not knowing the proper values he 'is lyable to be Imposed upon in every bargain he makes, and the tenants who do know to be sure will not deal unless they can make their market' [*ie* strike a highly favourable bargain], for if there were the slightest grounds upon which to base a claim for a reduction in value they would press it to the utmost, whilst they would ensure that any increases in value were concealed from the steward's knowledge. The administration of the Petre estate may have been untypically inefficient, although John Richards writing in 1730, did not regard the use of surveys a century old as anything out of the ordinary, and there can be no doubt that a significant proportion of western lifeholders paid fines calculated on the basis of an unrealistically low valuation.¹⁶

Once lessor and lessee had agreed upon the gross value of the holding, this was converted to a net figure by deducting the reserved rent and possibly certain other out-goings, and the approximate fine arrived at by multiplying this by the number of years' purchase appropriate to the length of term to be granted. This might then be rounded up or down to allow for special factors, like the cost of particular repairs or improvements to be borne by one party or the other, or as part of the normal process of bargaining. During periods of agricultural depression the sheer inability (or unwillingness) of tenants to pay the full amount demanded was inevitably an important consideration, for if any lives remained in being the landlord could not simply accept a higher bid, and if he failed to agree with the tenant in possession he might get no fine at all until the last life had dropped. In theory he could sell a reversionary lease to a third party to take effect when the outstanding one expired, but in such circumstances it was unlikely that he would be able to strike a markedly better bargain, and in any event to sell a man's holdings over his head

¹⁶BL, Add, MSS 28251, fol 372. J Richards, *The Gentleman's Steward*, 1730, p xxix.

gained a landlord a bad name. Once the amount of the fine had finally been agreed upon the sum was discharged by the tenant in two or three instalments. In practice the number of years' purchase charged for fresh lifehold grants, and for renewals to leases and copies in being, varied somewhat at any given time from district to district, and even within quite a limited district. This might reflect the traditional usage of a particular estate. Alternatively it might be the corollary of changes over time in the relative values of different types of land. Likewise a higher or lower multiple could be used to off-set glaring discrepancies between the book value and the real value of a holding which had developed for any other reason. It might also reflect the strength or weakness of the bargaining positions of either landlord or tenant, or the existence of competition for a particular holding. Thus in 1717 Sir Stephen Fox's agent in Wiltshire informed his dead master's executors that one John Thring wished to add a third life to his copyhold in Codford Manor, and that although the usual fine was two years' purchase 'he seems to be very Desireous to have it so I hope to make him pay 2 years & $\frac{1}{2}$ if you please to Suffer me so to Doe'.¹⁷

Most of the available evidence about fining rates derives from the south-west, and fragmentary though it is, it consistently points to the conclusion that there at least they remained remarkably stable for most of the period. In Dorset in the 1650s, and indeed as far back as the 1610s, and in Wiltshire, Somerset and Cornwall in the 1670s, the going rates were from 12 to 14 years'

purchase for a new lease of 99 years determinable upon three lives, six to seven years' purchase for adding two lives to one in being, and two years' purchase for adding one to two in being.¹⁸ Half a century later the same range of rates apparently continued to prevail, and although by then 12 years' purchase for a fresh grant was probably unusually low it was reported to be the custom on the Duke of Bedford's manor of Milton Abbot (Devon) in 1726. However, by the 1720s at the latest a definite upward movement was underway, so that in following decades the normal range was between 14 and 16 years' purchase for 99 years determinable upon three lives and, in practice the most important rate, about two and a half years' purchase for the renewal of a single life.¹⁹ Finally in the last third of the century there was another upswing in the price of leases which carried the normal rate in the south-west up to 18 years' purchase.²⁰ For other parts of the country one can speak with less assurance, but for Shropshire, Cheshire and Lancashire evidence for the mid-seventeenth century suggests a going rate of 10 years' purchase for a lease of 99 years determinable upon three lives. Although the significance of this apparent difference is not altogether clear, it is likely to reflect a different procedure for calculating the fines,

¹⁷Dorset RO, D 124 Estate. Wiltshire (box 178): J Pavey to 'Sir', 2 Feb 1716/17.

¹⁸J H Bettey, 'Agriculture and Rural Society in Dorset 1570-1670', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 1977, pp 215, 219-20. I am also indebted to Dr Bettey for several conversations in connection with the preparation of this article. Dorset RO, D 14 Manorial. Wiltshire (box 19): surveys of Allington; and Family (box 236): surveys of Maddington, Farley, and Plaitford. Somerset RO, DD/SG. 32. Cornwall RO, DD/EN 971/1 and 2.

¹⁹Wilts RO, 383/255: survey of Stourton, 1704; 298, documents relating to W Knoyle, 1730s; 175, survey of Charnage 1743; and 193, survey of Holwell, pre 1760. Dorset RO, D 124 Estate. General (box 170): particular of Somerset estate, 1712; Family (box 236): 'A particular of leases . . . signed . . . Janry ye 2 1713'. Devon RO, Bedford MSS. T 1258 M/E 48b: survey of Milton Abbot, etc, 1726. E Laurence. *A Dissertation on Estates upon Lives and Years*, 1730, pp 5-6. Richards, op cit, pp 12-13. Anon, *The Reasonableness of Church and Colleges Fines Asserted*, 1731, p 11. Wilts RO, 727/ particulars of Fifield, 1739; Enford, 1755. Savernake MSS correspondence: 'Observations on the particular of Pewsey', c1765. Longleat MSS: particulars of Godwell and Chapmanslade, c1733. BL, Add MSS 51409, fol 10, 51410, fols 1-2: surveys of Charlton and Singleton, and Winterbourne Bassett.

²⁰Wilts RO, 727/ particular of Manningford Bruce, 1770; 490/940, particular of Lavington Rector, 1772; 383/133, particular of Bonham, 1785. Marshall, *Rural Economy of the West*, I, p 72.

probably one based upon real rather than 'book' values.²¹

Throughout the period textbooks were available which provided tables of the appropriate rates at which to sell beneficial leases, given various assumptions about the age of the lives upon which they were to depend and the rate of interest to be allowed to the purchaser.²² However, it is doubtful how much influence these in fact had upon the rates that actually prevailed. Laurence and Richards, both writing in 1730, made it clear that proper rules were seldom adhered to by those selling leases, and the latter felt it necessary to deal at some length with the argument that 'the custom of leasing in particular places is the only rule for valuation, at least the only one which will be follow'd.'²³ Why rates of fining increased when they did, seemingly between 1720 and 1740, and again from the 1760s onwards, can only be a matter for conjecture. As far as the first of these periods is concerned, it coincided with a sustained upward movement in the price of freehold land,²⁴ which must have made many owners conscious of the high return their tenants were getting through the purchase of leases at the traditional rates. It was also a time of unprecedentedly low rates of interest on borrowed money. Moreover the 1710s and 1720s, though not the 1730s, saw higher agricultural profits and greater tenant

competition for land, which must have brought about a marked improvement in the bargaining position of landlords. At any rate it must have been some such combination of factors which enabled the latter to break through the barrier which tradition, reinforced by the effect of successive periods of agricultural depression upon the ability of farmers to pay higher fines, had for so long imposed upon any alteration in the basis of calculation.

IV

Precedent usage inevitably had a powerful effect upon the fining rates landlords charged for grants or renewals of leases for 99 years determinable upon lives, because in practice, although not in law, this form of tenure was a quasi-customary one. This was exemplified by the fact that on some west-country manors both life leaseholders and copyholders were known collectively as 'conventional tenants'. Nevertheless there were important differences between customary land proper and non-customary land, for the customs of some manors were highly favourable to the tenants and everywhere imposed at least some limitations upon the landlord's freedom of action in respect of his tenants and their holdings. Thus since the sixteenth century, if not before, there had been a tendency for the amount of land held under customary tenures proper to diminish as a growing proportion of it was converted to freehold and leasehold. In the east, where copyhold of inheritance was the most common form of customary tenure, this took the form either of landlords buying out their tenants' hereditary interests, or of copyholders enfranchising their tenancies by buying the freehold from the lord of the manor. In either case the copyhold was merged with the freehold, and the land either farmed as demesne by its owner or let out at a rack rent. In the west where copyhold was usually for lives, the landlords were in some senses in a stronger position: they did not need to buy

²¹E Hopkins, 'The Re-leasing of the Ellesmere Estates, 1637-42', *Ag Hist Rev*, X, 1962, pp 22-3. Gibson (ed), *A Cavalier's Note Book*, p 254. Bridgeman and Bridgeman, 'The sequestration papers of Sir Orlando Bridgeman', p 36. See also, although it relates to the period c1610, 'The Memoranda Book of James Bankes' in J Bankes and E Kerridge (eds), *The Early Records of the Bankes Family at Winstanley*, Chetham Society, 1973, pp 21-33.

²²The first of these seems to have been Thomas Clay's *Briefe and Necessary Tables for the Valuation of Leases, Annuities etc.*, 1622. Others published in the early part of the period included H Phillipps, *The Purchasers Pattern*, successive editions from 1654; and S Primatt, *The City and Country Purchaser and Builder*, 1667.

²³Laurence, *Dissertation on Estates*, pp 1-10. Richards, *Gentleman's Steward*, pp xvii-xviii.

²⁴C Clay, 'The price of freehold land in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, XXVII, 1974.

their tenants out (although they sometimes did so in order to secure immediate control of their land) for they were not obliged to renew lives as they dropped, and they could eventually acquire unencumbered possession simply by waiting. On the other hand, as we have already seen, this meant doing without income from fines for a considerable time before the holding fell into hand.²⁵ In practice, therefore, if they wished to be rid of customary tenures they usually took advantage of applications for the renewal of a dropped life to oblige their tenants to surrender the unexpired portion of their copyhold grant, and in return gave them a lease on almost, but not quite, identical terms. This involved the landlords in no interruption in the flow of renewal fines, but achieved the end of removing his relationship with the tenant from the ambit of manorial custom, and making it the subject of a private contract. As for the copyholders, the fact that manorial lords were under no obligation to renew their grants once the last lives had expired meant that they could not resist a change to leasehold if the latter were determined on it. Moreover by surrendering the outstanding portion of a copyhold term and accepting a fresh lease for 99 years determinable upon three lives in exchange, they must usually have secured a renewal for a lower fine than they would otherwise have had to pay, partly because they will have received some consideration for having agreed to the surrender, and partly because in many districts leasehold fining rates were slightly lower than copyhold rates anyway.²⁶ Nor, as we shall see, did the acceptance of a lease make much practical difference to the tenant, even if it did open the way to changes which might affect his descendants or successors.

This conversion of copyhold into leasehold for 99 years determinable upon three lives was

a phenomenon that was particularly marked in the south west, and indeed in Devonshire copyhold was already virtually extinct on manors in private hands by the end of the period. In other parts of the region, seemingly those where more land was held in large estates owned by absentees, change proceeded more slowly: in Dorset, for instance, it had not gone far by 1700 although the pace quickened markedly in the eighteenth century.²⁷ Elsewhere in the western part of the country the conversion of customary tenures into leasehold was less marked in this period. Particularly in the far north-west they remained vigorous, and there is no sign that their extent diminished before 1750. This was partly because custom gave the landlords certain advantages which were absent further south, notably the right to levy a fine upon the tenantry upon their own succession to the estate, and partly because a custom of inheritance put the latter in a strong position. Nor was there much buying them out, whether by indigenous gentry interested in consolidating their inherited properties or by moneyed outsiders building up new ones. The former were generally too poorly off to afford it, and the latter, in that remote region, were very few in number.²⁸

V

A large proportion of the land held by lease in the western half of the country in this period had thus been copyhold in the recent past. Indeed essentially western leasehold *was* copyhold, deprived of the features which the landlords found obnoxious by the breaking of the legal dependance upon manorial custom. In very many practical respects the two types of tenure were virtually identical, and the terms of the leases continued to reflect what custom, in a non-technical sense, prescribed.

²⁵ See above p 85.

²⁶ For the difference in value between copyholds and leaseholds see references cited in nn 19 and 20 above. The reason for the higher fining rates upon copyholds was the widespread existence of the custom of widowhoods: see below pp 93-4.

²⁷ W G Hoskins, 'The Occupation of Land in Devonshire 1650-1800', *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries*, XXI, 1940-41, pp 2-3. Bettey, 'Agriculture and Rural Society in Dorset', pp 183, 212.

²⁸ J V Beckett, 'Landownership in Cumbria, c 1680-c 1750', unpublished PhD thesis, Univ of Lancaster, 1975, pp 140-2, 144-7.

Certainly Edward Laurence, writing in 1730, considered that the change from one to the other would be in no way disadvantageous to 'an honest tenant', by which he meant one who did not try to exploit custom 'unfairly' to his landlord's prejudice.²⁹ Lessees paid the same diminutive quit rents to which copyholders were liable. They generally had to pay small rents in kind (such as a capon or two) in addition, and not infrequently were obliged to render a few days' labour every year, carting, ploughing, reaping, or threshing. It was also very common, though again not universal, for them to be liable to the ancient death-duty of the heriot, which had formerly been one of the hallmarks of serfdom. This gave the landlord the right to take the best and most valuable item (the choice being his) from amongst the lessee's moveable goods each time a life dropped, and although payment of a sum of money instead was often specified, whether or not to accept the monetary alternative seems as often as not to have been left to the owner's election. Especially in the south-west it was common for lessees to be obliged to do suit of court, and in some instances (for instance the mid-seventeenth-century leases granted by Ralph Sadleir of properties in Henbury, Gloucestershire), were specifically covenanted to obey manorial bye-laws. And both in the south-west and elsewhere, as on the Bridgewater estate in Shropshire, suit of mill, that is an obligation to have their corn ground at the manorial mill, was imposed on them. In Sadleir's leases the virtual identity of the conditions of tenure between copyhold and leasehold was made quite unambiguous by the wording of a covenant which required the rendering of 'A harriott in kinde as copyholders of the Manor of Henbury are accustomed to doe and doing suit of court at the Manor of Henbury as copyholders of the said Manor have done and are used to doe'.³⁰

²⁹ Laurence, *Dissertation on Estates*, p 24.

³⁰ Bristol City RO, AC/WO/12 (31, 32); AS/22/2, 28/2, 32/2, 39/1, 49/1. D Hey, *Myddle*, Leicester, 1974, pp 80-1.

Beyond these matters beneficial leases usually went no further than to set out a very few conditions of tenure. The tenant was to keep the premises in good repair. He was not to cut timber for sale, though he might take what he needed for the maintenance of his buildings, fences, gates, and equipment, besides 'lops and tops' or 'underwood' for domestic fuel. He was not to plough up old pasture or meadow without obtaining permission, and he was not to assign his lease or sub-let without permission either. It was also common for tenants to be required to plant a certain number of trees, usually oak, ash or elm, in their hedgerows every year, a provision which was essential if there was to be a constant succession of timber available for repairs in the future: Lord Petre in Devon, Lord Gower in Staffordshire, and the Earl of Bridgewater in Shropshire all demanded this in the mid- or later seventeenth century. So did Earl Poulett in Somerset in the mid-eighteenth century, for instance at Chaffcombe. Some landlords, including Gower and Bridgewater, also demanded that their tenants use on the premises all the farm manure produced there, but this requirement was by no means universal and neither Lord Petre nor Lord Stourton (on his Wiltshire estate) wrote it into their leases. It seems to have been less common in the south-west and it may have been impossible to insist on it where units of cultivation did not coincide with the units of tenure, and farms often consisted of land held from more than one lessor, or were part lifehold and part the lessees' own freehold.³¹

The conditions attached to leases for years determinable upon lives were thus frequently no more than the minimum the common law took for granted that the holder of any lease would be subjected to.³² In practice they probably very often represented the landlord's

³¹ Devon RO, 123 M/L, passim. Wilts RO, 383/passim, for instance 720, 721, 726. Somerset RO, DD/PT box 20. Wordie, 'A Great Landed Estate in the Eighteenth Century', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading, 1967, pp 361-2. Hey, loc cit.

³² G Jacob, *A New Law Dictionary*, 1729 ed, sub 'lease'.

interpretation of the usages which had formerly regulated customary tenancies in the manor in question. Under customary tenure the landlord had to rely primarily upon action in the manor court to defend his rights against tenants who were encroaching upon them, for instance by abusing the custom which allowed them to take wood for repairs. But quite apart from the fact that custom might permit the tenants to go further in some directions than the landlord would have wished, manorial juries could not necessarily be relied upon to uphold presentments brought before them, and the 'ameracements' they imposed for breaches of custom or local bye-laws were often totally inadequate deterrents. With the grant of leases, however, the landlord placed his tenants under covenants to restrain them from prejudicial practices and to enjoin them to beneficial ones. A penalty for breach of covenants could be written into the leases, for instance an increase of rent of £2 or £5 for every acre of pasture ploughed up, or a payment of £1 for every timber tree illegally lopped. But even if no such penalties were laid down landlords could always threaten immediate legal proceedings for damages or to secure ejectment, against a tenant who refused to toe the line. The change from customary tenure to leasehold thus meant little change in traditional conditions of tenure, but involved the careful spelling out of exactly what those conditions were, and the provision of a much more effective means of enforcing them. Probably the landlord-tenant relationship was not greatly altered in practice on the majority of estates, at least before the middle of the eighteenth century. Of course once the legal basis of the relationship had been changed from manorial custom to written contract there was no obstacle in the way of a landlord who wished to modify it, however radically, by the insertion into his leases of covenants completely unknown to custom. But few if any landlords seem to have taken advantage of this before 1750.

One of the most tangible benefits which accrued to landlords in the south-west when

they converted copyhold tenure into leasehold was that they rid themselves of the custom of 'widow's free bench' which was widespread in the region. This allowed the relicts of the male lives upon which copyhold tenancies depended to retain possession of the holdings for life, subject only to the proviso that they did not re-marry and (on some manors) remained chaste as well. As a result copyhold grants which were nominally for three lives were in effect for four or more. In normal circumstances the value of grants was not greatly increased by the additional lives, especially as they were female ones, and anyway the difference was taken account of by the somewhat higher level of fines paid for copyholds. For instance on the Somerset manor of Shapwick cum Moorlinch, a set of 'rules for selling' drawn up in 1677 laid down a rate of 14 years' purchase for a fresh lease of 99 years determinable upon three lives, and 15 years' purchase for a copyhold grant for three lives.³³ However, the landlord's calculations could be upset when a holding depended on a single elderly male life, and that life chose to marry a young girl who survived him for a long period. This was a device sometimes resorted to by widowers who had neglected to renew or had been unable to do so, as a means of providing for children by an earlier marriage. How common it was is impossible to say, for details only come to light when a subsequent inter-family dispute caused a breakdown in arrangements and a lawsuit, but one early eighteenth-century observer thought it 'no unusual thing' in Devonshire, and several authorities agreed that it was relatively common in Dorset at the end of the century.³⁴ The custom was not a new one, but it may have caught the attention of landowners more frequently at this time because people were living longer, and abuse may

³³Somerset RO, DD/SG 32.

³⁴J H Bettey, 'Marriages of Convenience by Copyholders in Dorset During the Seventeenth Century', *Proc Dorset Arch Soc*, XCVIII, 1976. D A Heaton, 'A Study of the Structure of Corporate Estate Management of the Lands of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury', unpubl MA thesis, Univ of Kent, 1971, pp 138-9.

have become more common as fining rates rose towards the end of our period. Certainly the increase in the latter meant that the landlord experienced a greater financial loss when a long-lived widow prevented him selling a fresh three-life term to a new tenant.³⁵

VI

The covenants in leases for lives were somewhat more numerous and more detailed in districts, such as parts of Shropshire and Staffordshire, where both they and leases for years were common, and tended to be fewest and briefest in the south-west. Taking the region as a whole, however, there is no doubt that western lifehold imposed far fewer detailed restrictions upon the tenants than the average eastern lease for years, and in general tenants were subject to much less close supervision by their landlords. They enjoyed what was in effect hereditary tenure, and they therefore had as good a reason as the latter for wanting to maintain their premises in good order by undertaking the necessary repairs. Likewise they could in general be relied upon to themselves eschew, or prohibit their subtenants from indulging in, farming practices like growing straw crops many years in succession on the same land which might bring an immediate gain but which would be detrimental to the soil in the longer run. And, since they would themselves reap most of the benefits, the terms of their tenure provided every incentive for them to make such improvements to their farms as their resources would permit. In 1679 Sir Robert Southwell congratulated a correspondent for being 'so intent upon the method of taking fines' on the grounds that it would not only 'tie the tenant fast' but also 'encourage him to all improvements of advancing and beautifying the estate'.³⁶ A marked contrast in the treat-

ment meted out by one Devonshire farmer to land held by different tenures was reported by the Duke of Bedford's agent in the west in 1743. The agent had been to visit the man and found him to be 'a very bad husband on the land he rents (although a very good one on his own which he holds for three lives) . . .'. He was ruthlessly exploiting the former for a quick gain, but the agent had no doubt that he would manage it very differently if he had that too for lives.³⁷ Late eighteenth century authorities like Marshall argued in a quite different sense, for they asserted that lifehold and the fining system invariably produced bad farming since it deprived the tenant of the capital he might otherwise have used to improve his farm or increase his stocking ratio.³⁸ However, it should be noted that whether or not their strictures were justified at the time they were written, they are inapplicable to most if not all of the period we are concerned with, partly because fining rates were much lower, and partly because less capital was required to operate a farm in what contemporaries regarded as an 'improved' fashion.

The coincidence of interests between landlord and tenant where life leases prevailed meant that lessors were less concerned with *who* their lessees were than when they depended for their income upon rack rents paid half yearly by men whose more limited interest in their holdings provided a greater incentive to exploit for short-term gains. In such cases the choice of competent and honest tenants, adequately provided with capital to stock their farms, was of the greatest importance, and on a large estate was a major and continuing preoccupation for the agent, since a wrong choice would cause heavy loss, not only in rent arrears but also in damage done to the value of the land. When lifeholds were granted 'out of hand', for fresh terms to unknown tenants, no doubt candidates were

³⁵A landlord could always sell a reversionary lease to commence after the death of the widow, but the rate for this would be considerably lower than for a fresh grant 'out of hand'.

³⁶HMC Egmont, II, p 84.

³⁷Devon RO, Bedford MSS, W 1258M/LP 5/6: J Wynne to ?, 27 Sept 1743.

³⁸Marshall, *Rural Economy of the West*, I, pp 43-8.

vetted with some care, but the necessity for this did not often arise since the normal procedure was for terms to be renewed whilst one or more lives were still in being. And with renewals landlords in general showed little interest in the identity of the tenant, provided that they were willing and able to pay their fines. In general, moreover, lifeholders could be left very much to their own devices, and the regular personal contact between the owner or his agent and the tenants, which occurred on properly run rack-rented estates, was much less common on those let for lives. The owner or agent needed to keep track of the lives by which farms were held, but the only direct dealings they had with the lifeholders might well be on audit days, and at the dropping of a life, when a hurried visit to secure the best beast or chattel by way of a heriot was followed by negotiations for a renewal fine. Once the fine had been paid the landlord, unlike the owner of rack-rented property, did not have a pressing interest in trying to ensure that his tenant's farming operations were yielding a profit. Nor, if he were losing money, did he have to worry about the security of rent arrears.

The management of estates let for lives, therefore, set much less of a premium on expertise in husbandry, and ability to deal with tenants on their own level, than did that of rack-rented estates. It was a much more strictly administrative task, in which the most important functions were the compilation of a set of records and keeping them up to date; receiving rents which were only likely to fall into arrears through the receiver's own inefficiency; organizing the collection of heriots; holding manor courts; drawing up the documents for the renewal of leases; and above all negotiating an endless succession of renewal fines. All these were matters which were perfectly adequately handled by attorneys, and the majority of estates let entirely for lives were probably administered by them, and with few of the inefficiencies which some late eighteenth-century

authorities considered inevitable when they were employed in this way.

There were, however, two sets of circumstances in which a landlord could not rely upon parallelism of interest between himself and his tenants to ensure that his estate was properly farmed. One of these was when he was not prepared to renew a lifehold, or when a tenant had himself decided to allow his lease to run out. Particularly likely to suffer abuse in such cases were holdings where two of the three lives had already dropped. As Lord Petre's steward observed in 1714, 'When an estate comes to hang upon one life and that life is not able to fill up, it's grave odds if that Estate be not Rack'd out & ruined', and he recommended that a special list of such holdings should be kept so that the local bailiffs would know whom to watch.³⁹ The other circumstance in which an estate out on lives might suffer was where sub-letting had become very extensive. Even then, as long as the lessees were local gentry and other members of the rural community, the landlord could usually rely on them to keep a close eye upon the actual occupiers. But it could be quite otherwise where the leases had passed into the hands of persons who live outside the district (professional men, traders or gentlewomen from some large town, for instance), who had acquired them purely as investments, and neither knew nor cared how their sub-tenants behaved provided they paid their rent. One of the subsidiary motives behind the conversion from customary tenure to leasehold in the south-west seems to have been a desire to exercise some control over sub-letting by copyholders, for manorial custom was often in practice a totally, ineffective instrument for achieving this. Certainly leases for 99 years determinable upon lives invariably included a covenant binding the lessee to seek licence to sub-let, and the penalty for unlicensed sub-letting was commonly forfeiture of the unexpired portion of the term, although if the landlord did not bother to enforce his

³⁹BL, Add MSS 28251, fol 372.

covenants matters could get equally far out of hand on a leased estate. This is well illustrated by the case of the Dunkenhalth estate in Lancashire, which for nearly three-quarters of a century after 1713 was in the hands of the heiress Catharine Walmsley, later lady and dowager Lady Stourton, an absentee who totally neglected her property. By 1787 the result of many decades of unrestricted subletting in a region of rapid commercial development was 'that the subtenants . . . through high and excessive rack Rents have commonly been reduced and under Necessity of being sold up, and obliged to quit their farms quite ruin'd . . . by which means the Buildings of the different estates have been much neglected, and are now in a most

ruinous state, and that also thro' the Hay & Fodder being continually sold off the premises, and other ill Treatments by poor and abusive occupiers, the Estates are (according to a late Calculation) made rendered worth nearly one half their real & true value, as if they had been occupied in a fair and Husbandlike manner . . .'.⁴⁰ It was thus not invariably the case that estates let for lives could be safely left to the casual oversight of an attorney preoccupied with many other affairs, but it was much less often attended with bad results than has often been asserted.

⁴⁰Lancs RO, D/DPt 23: printed circular to tenants, dated 22 Oct 1787.

Notes and Comments

ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM, 1980

The twenty-ninth Conference of the Society was held at Horncastle Residential College, Horncastle, Lincolnshire, 6–8 April 1981. Papers were presented by Ms Marie Stinson, 'What Profits? Rent and Surplus in the Feudal Economy'; Dr John Beckett, 'The English Peasant: a Case of Terminological Confusion?'; Professor Maurice Barley, 'Rural Building, 1640–1750'; Dr Steve Haresign, 'The Lincolnshire Fenlands, 1870–1914'; and Mr Brian Wood, 'Open Field Farming at Laxton'. Mr Rex Russell provided an introductory lecture to the landscape history of rural Lindsey and led a splendid excursion into the landscape around Horncastle. After the conclusion of the formal part of the conference, Mr Brian Wood led an afternoon excursion to Laxton, and around fifteen of the sixty who attended the conference took advantage of excellent conditions overhead and underfoot to walk over South Field. Particular thanks were due to Mr Russell and Mr Wood for leading two excellent field trips.

The twenty-ninth AGM was held on 7 April 1981. Professor Chaloner, Professor Mingay, Dr Collins, and Dr Chartres were re-elected as the officers of the Society. Five vacancies on the Executive Committee were filled by the re-election of Dr Baker, Mr Havinden, Dr Overton, and Dr Phillips, and by the election of Dr Raine Morgan. The Society extended its good wishes and thanks to Mr George Ordish who had retired from membership of the committee after serving from the beginning of the Society in 1954. Mr Ordish had two years off the committee, enforced by

the pre-1966 provisions of the constitution, and served two terms as its Chairman, from 1957–59 and 1971–73.

In presenting the report of the Executive Committee, the Chairman, Professor Thompson commented on an active year for the Society. Compared with the equivalent point in 1980, there appeared to have been a slight fall in membership, from 828 to 818, but this was due in part to a stricter treatment of arrears by the Treasurer. Some losses had also occurred through institutions closing down. The committee had been active in its attempt to prevent the sale of Laxton, but no certain information was available on the sale or the possible purchasers. Another successful winter conference had been held jointly with the Institute of British Geographers on 6 December 1980 on the theme 'The Dissemination of Agricultural Knowledge'. The conference had attracted a record attendance of over 100, and thanks were expressed to the organizers, Drs Baker and Phillips. The next Winter Conference would again be held jointly with the IBG on 5 December 1981. The next Spring Conference was announced for April 1981 at St Andrews. The Society had also had an active year with its publications, Methuen & Co being pleased with the sales of Abel, and some sales made of Thomas Munck's book through the Society. Copies of Brewer's bibliography, *Enclosures and the Open Fields*, published by the Society in 1972 were now available free of charge to those who could make good use of them.

(continued on page 110)

Holly as a Fodder in England*

By MARTIN SPRAY

*Lyarde es ane olde horse. . . . He salle be
putt into the parke holyne for to gnawe* ['Lyarde' c1440]

I
ATENTION was drawn by Radley¹ to the importance of the woody evergreen holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) as a winter fodder for sheep, from at least the thirteenth to the early eighteenth century, in the southern Pennine region of the English North Midlands. He comments that 'the practice of feeding animals on holly seems to have been confined primarily to the grits and sandstones' of that area, where the acidic soils allowed — and still allow — only very poor grazing and little winter bite. His references are largely to documents in the Sheffield City Archives. He concludes, however, that place-name evidence may indicate that the practice was more widespread than this localization in the Pennine foothills of North Derbyshire and South Yorkshire.

A more extensive search of the Sheffield archives has been made, and its conclusions published locally.² This confirmed the importance of the practice in this area, and its continuance up to the middle of the eighteenth century. Although it is well recorded, it is not well remembered. Local farmers of the very sites where holly was formerly encouraged are (predictably) sceptical of its palatability and use as a fodder.

That holly is palatable to the larger herbivores, and is likely to be subject to browsing, is clear from the plant itself — it is well armed. Cattle, horses, sheep, and goats frequently browse it casually. However, the evidence for its exploitation elsewhere in Britain is at best mostly cryptic. Its use in

Europe also is not clear, although there are incidental references to the practice in north-west France.³ Several other woody plants, evergreen and deciduous, are attested fodders in Britain, in some cases better documented than holly.

Heather or Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), of course, is still extensively grazed by large numbers of sheep. It is interesting to reflect on the evidence that the 'weed' gorse (*Ulex europaeus*, and the two smaller species to a less extent) was formerly widely sown as a regular cattle and horse fodder.⁴ It was even used in field rotations as a nitrogen restorer. Broom and whins (*Sarothamnus scoparius* and *Genista* spp) were much less important.

Ivy (*Hedera helix*), whose medicinal qualities are still occasionally remembered,⁵ was much recommended by Roman agriculturalists, and is still gathered in some Mediterranean areas. In northern Europe it has long been important;⁶ and the abundance of its pollen in some Mesolithic settlements indicates its

suggestion that they feed their stock on holly: their positiveness was useful.

¹J Radley, 'Holly as a Winter feed', *Agric Hist Rev*, IX, 1961, pp 89–92.

²M Spray and D J Smith, 'The rise and fall of holly in the Sheffield region', *Trans Hunter Archaeol Soc*, X, 1977, pp 239–51.

³Eg J Lindley and T Moore, *Treasury of Botany*, 1866 (for sheep); *Ency Brit*, 13th edn (for cattle).

⁴Eg A G Tansley, *The British Islands and their Vegetation*, Cambridge, 1939 (for Wales); C J Robb, letter in *Country Life*, 15 May 1958, p 1079 (for Ireland). There are many references to its growth, and milling to make it more acceptable, eg C P Johnson, *The useful Plants of Great Britain*, 1867; S Ely 'On the cultivation of gorse as a food for cattle', *J R A S E*, 1st ser, VI, 1848, pp 523–8.

⁵G Millar, letter *Farmers' Weekly*, 9 January 1976, p 45. Several personal correspondents knew of its use, one from Dyfed having actually used it. Johnson, op cit, notes its use in antiquity.

⁶J Troels-Smith, 'Ivy, mistletoe and elm: climatic indicators — fodder plants', *Danm Geol Unders*, Rk IV, Nr 4, 1960, pp 1–32.

*I am especially grateful to Dennis Smith for his time spent with the Sheffield City Archives, and to Arthur Lord for his pragmatic comments. Reference is made in the footnotes to much valuable correspondence. I would also wish to thank the several farmers who looked aghast at the

importance as a winter stock feed here.⁷ In Europe, Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) was gathered;⁸ but it has probably never been sufficiently abundant in Britain.

It is quite clear that for a long period woodland grazing was of critical importance to stock rearing in Britain. Even in the Middle Ages, 'the cow appears . . . to be mainly associated with forests and upland ranges . . .',⁹ and the forests were carefully used. Only with the growing importance of sheep did 'open' grazings predominate in much of the country — ironically leading to their eventual degradation over vast areas, and the advent of heather grazings. Cox remarks that of all browsewood cut and taken to stock in the Royal Forest oaks (*Quercus robur* and *petraea*) were especially important.¹⁰ Prehistorically and historically, elms (*Ulmus*) were the mainstay of many stock animals, foliage being gathered from pollards throughout the growing season, and the winter fodder being provided from autumn gatherings. This practice seems to account to some extent for the controversial 'Elm Decline' in northern Europe.¹¹ Troels-Smith notes that as late as the end of the nineteenth century some Norwegian farmers wintered their animals largely on dried elm leaves.¹²

Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is highly palatable, and provided another useful cattle and sheep fodder, often used in Britain.¹³ Many other species are also eaten, and were doubtless resorted to in severe weather. All these, of course, as well as bushes such as the well-armed hawthorns (*Crataegus monogyna* and

oxyacanthoides) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), and the subwoody brambles (*Rubus fruticosus*) and roses (*Rosa* spp), are browsed by deer, and were often lopped for them.

If the difficulties of wintering stock in Britain are still considerable, they were formerly always critical. Summer grazings in the lowlands usually provided an adequate diet, but normally left little for the winter. The better organized farms could provide some conserved grass, and grains and pulses. But by midwinter these feeds were usually running short: the post-medieval farmer was still well advised to cut browse for his animals. His difficulties in the uplands were commonly desperate because of lack or inaccessibility of grazing:

The milch cows and sheep which were housed had to starve on straw, boiled chaff, mashed whins [presumably largely gorse], dry bent grass [*Agrostis*] and coarse rushes that had been cut in autumn from the marsh lands, with an occasional sheaf of oats during the months of February and March when they had reached the limits of endurance. Those that survived [an estimated 1 in 5 did not, each winter] . . . often had to be carried [to the pasture].¹⁴

Availability of adequate fresh browse must have added greatly to the value of land, and the chances of overwintering stock.

It seems surprising that the former importance of woody winter fodders is now hardly remembered — indeed, that many stockfarmers do not realize that their animals *can* eat woodland browse. The drought summers of the mid-1970s brought many revelations: some farmers in desperation experimented with whatever trees were available.

II

Although no extensive search for references in early farming texts has been made, as represented by modern authors they seem to be silent on holly fodder — perhaps suggestive of restricted usage or early

⁷I G Simmons and G W Dimbleby, 'The possible role of ivy (*Hedera helix* L.) in the Mesolithic economy of Western Europe', *J Archaeol Sci*, 1, 1974, pp 291–6.

⁸Troels-Smith, loc cit.

⁹R A Donkin, 'Cattle on the estates of mediaeval Cistercian monasteries', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, XV, 1962, pp 31–53.

¹⁰J C Cox, *The Royal Forests of England*, 1905.

¹¹For Britain see H Godwin *History of the British Flora*, Cambridge, 2nd edn, 1975; R E Sims, 'The anthropogenic factor in East Anglian vegetational history: an approach using A.P.F. techniques', in H J B Birks and R G West (eds), *Quaternary Plant Ecology*, Oxford, 1973.

¹²loc cit.

¹³Eg Johnson, op cit.

¹⁴J E Handley *Scottish Farming in the Eighteenth Century*, 1953.

neglect.¹⁵ Discussion of 'browse wood', however, is general; for example Tusser advises the lopping of 'all manner of trees' in January.¹⁶ He also refers specifically to gorse, broom, ivy, and mistletoe. Early woodland and forestry texts are similarly silent. Neither Manwood nor Evelyn discusses holly in this context; and the early Welsh laws also seem not to note it.¹⁷

In Britain, perhaps the best-known reference to the cutting of holly for stock is the diarist Abraham de la Pryme's note of 20 November 1696, referring to the Bradfield and Hope Woodland areas to the west of Sheffield.¹⁸ He and Glover indicate that holly was deliberately planted for this purpose.¹⁹ These are both late references, however.

In this district, as may be inferred from the will of Henry de Birley, the franklin, in 1391, every man's wealth was in sheep, and these during the greater part of the year required but little attention. Once, or sometimes twice a week, the owner rode out through chase or moorland, to look over his stock. . . . For the most part, even in winter, they fended for themselves, eating the last year's grass, finding herbage and roots amongst gorse and heather or beneath the thorn bushes, breaking ash boughs and peeling them from top to bottom, feeding greedily upon the bark and smooth leaves of the holly branches, lopped for them by the shepherd's axe.²⁰

Radley quotes a Sheffield area deed of 1320, and a Hope, Derbyshire, reference of the early thirteenth century. Local records show that the practice was quite important in the first half of the seventeenth century, after which its use seems to have declined rapidly.²¹

There are some early eighteenth-century references, and a few up to the late 1730s. 'Hollin rents', ranging from five or six shillings to £1 16s 0d a year, are noted in some rentals from the 1720s and '30s. This is roughly the same range as that of rentals in the same area in the 1630s and '40s. By the early eighteenth century, in the Sheffield area, holly was much less esteemed than formerly. An agreement in 1737 to rent holly bushes on a 21-year lease, seems to have been optimistic.²² From before that time there are references to the grubbing of holly trees, and attempts to increase the amount of grass pasture, eg:

6th January 1710/11: Expense y^e day with Mr Ashmore [woodward] and others, going again to Bradfield parish and endeavouring to sett y^e Hollins, Mr. Banks having burned and destroyed a great part therof — 1/6d.²³

It is interesting to note that Thomas Pennant, travelling in the Lake District in 1772, was surprised near Hawkeshead when he 'in one place observed a *Holly park*, a tract preserved entirely for sheep . . .'.²⁴

Nearly all the southern Pennine records examined concern the feeding of holly to sheep, which were the predominant stock of the area. Occasional references to its use as a fodder for deer occur, however. Within the same parish of Bradfield there are records in the 1660s of the 'red Deare of the High Mores': in 1667 £1 6s 8d was paid as a rent for some bushes from which to fodder them.²⁵

Besides examining the southern Pennine material, Spray and Smith, like Radley, suggest that the use of holly as a *regular* winter fodder may have been widespread in England. This paper attempts to indicate the likely extent of the practice. Although no other area appears to have been investigated in detail, there are many scattered references to

¹⁵Eg G E Fussell, *The English Dairy Farmer 1500–1900*, 1966; J Thirsk (ed), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, IV, 1500–1640*, Cambridge, 1967; R Trow-Smith, *A History of Livestock Husbandry to 1700*, 1957. Thirsk notes the Furness usage.

¹⁶Thomas Tusser, *Five hundreth good pointes of husbandry* . . . , 1573.

¹⁷John Manwood, *A Treatise of the Lawes of the Forest* [1598]; John Evelyn, *Sylva* . . . , 1664. For the Welsh laws see W Linnard, 'Forests and forestry in the ancient Welsh Laws', *QJ Forestry*, LXX, 1976, pp 38–43.

¹⁸Diary in *Trans Surtees Soc*, LIV, 1870, p 168.

¹⁹S Glover, *History and Gazetteer of the County of Derby*, Derby, 1831.

²⁰G R Sitwell *The Hurts of Holdsworth*, Oxford, 1930.

²¹See Spray and Smith, loc cit.

²²Sheffield City Libraries, ACM S377.

²³Sheffield City Libraries, ACM S161.

²⁴*Tour of Scotland, 1772, 1774–6*.

²⁵Sheffield City Libraries, Ronksley Collection 159, no 11549; and again in 1669 (no 11550).

the practice in the literature. The instances noted below must be regarded as rather random 'finds'.

Although, like de la Pryme's note, it indicates an unfamiliarity, the quotation from Pennant suggests a well-established north-western usage. Besides Pennant, Thomas West's remarks²⁶ that in Furness 'this custom has never been discontinued', and that 'the holly trees are carefully preserved for that purpose, where all other wood is cleared off, and large tracts of common pasture are so covered with these trees, as to have the appearance of a forest of hollies', indicate that the species was still important in the Lake District in the 1770s: '... a stranger unacquainted with this practice would imagine the holly-bush to have been sacred amongst fellanders'. Indeed, in severe winters in this century holly has been lopped by Cumbrian shepherds.²⁷

South of the Lake District, in Bowland, holly was for a long period cut both by foresters, for deer, and by farmers for their stock.²⁸ Sales are recorded for 1295-6. 'Most of Bowland Chase was planted with holly';²⁹ although by the seventeenth century much of this seems to have been removed, and a 1556 survey notes that

all the residue of the woods of Bolland are olde hollyns, olde heythornes, olde hassiles, olde crabtrees and oller [alder] wood, all of which except the oller wood, on account of great age and cropping are worth nothing.³⁰

Holly is still fairly plentiful in the area, especially in hedges.

Further south again, still within the Lancaster Forest area, are records from West Derby, where in the 1290s tenants were

making 2s yearly payments for holly fodder. 'All the men of West Derby paid for holly in the forinsec [limited pasturage] woods.' The amount paid was about the same as that for free range pasturage in the forest. To the east of the Cheshire Plain, holly seems to have been of some importance in the Macclesfield Forest area. References to the getting of winter holly (Med Latin *husseiam* and *hus*) occur in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.³¹ one of them records that in 1358-59 8d was paid for cutting holly for certain weak animals of Macclesfield Manor. This, of course, is close to the southern end of the Pennines in Derbyshire, where, as noted earlier, records are frequent.

There are also south Derbyshire references. For example, at Duffield some tenants and copyholders in the late sixteenth century had the duty and the right 'in winter to lop hollice and other undergrowth for relief of the queens game when there were deer, and for their own cattle and sheep. . . .'³² Elsewhere in the county, in 1632, copyholders were charged with combination to defeat manorial privileges, by claiming a similar right.³³

Information from the more eastern parts of the north of England appears to be less readily found. No reference to the practice in the North York Moors has come to light, although in exceptionally snowy winters in this century holly has been cut for sheep on some farms. A more systematic search would doubtless discover records in this area. For the northern and middle Pennines, also, records seem sparse. However, in Nidderdale, near Harrogate, indictments for removing holly from woodland were recorded in 1296-97.³⁴ Later, 'the Holyngplace near Patheley [Pateley] Bridge' was rented by various tenants for 20s a year, in 1531-32. Local

²⁶ *Antiquities of Furness*, 1774, quoted in W H Pearsall and W Pennington, *The Lake District*, 1973. West — amongst others — noted that 'mutton so fed has a remarkable fine flavour'.

²⁷ Eg Pearsall and Pennington, *op cit*. Interestingly, the deer of this area diet extensively on juniper (R S J Chad, 'The red deer of Furness Fells' *Forestry*, XXXIX, 1966, pp 135-50.)

²⁸ R C Shaw, *The Royal Forests of Lancaster*, Preston, 1956.

²⁹ Shaw, *pers comm*.

³⁰ Shaw, *op cit*.

³¹ Information from B C Redwood, County Archivist.

³² Cox, *op cit*.

³³ G E Hurt *Notes & Queries*, 10th ser, XII, p 428. The manor is not named.

³⁴ B Jennings (ed), *A History of Nidderdale*, Huddersfield, 1967.

rights, however, were not clear: several disputes over grazing and cutting rights are noted in the Fountains Abbey records. 'Holly . . . was not generally regarded as a common right in Nidderdale. The tenants of Hartwith and Winsley paid extra rents both before and after the dissolution for the right to take holly, and a share in the latter was conveyed with the farms in the 1570s.' Holly was there cut for cattle and sheep.

Early records of Bolton Priory suggest that, as a supplement to grain and other dry feed, holly leaves may have been very important.³⁵ South Yorkshire searches have shown some incidental records from the Leeds area; but their number suggests that a thorough scrutiny might yield fewer than the comparable search in the Sheffield archives.

From the north-east Midlands lowlands no references have come to light.

South of the north Midlands evidence for the importance of holly comes from at least two areas: Shropshire and Staffordshire, and the New Forest. For the latter, where holly is abundant, Tubbs draws attention to the continued importance of holly for deer and the feral ponies, both as natural browse and as loppings in winter.³⁶ Young holly growth is often severely suppressed as a result of browsing and mature trees characteristically exhibit a 'browse line'. Also in Hampshire, in Bere Forest, deer were traditionally fed with 'holly, ivy and the tips of thorn bushes, when the season required it'.³⁷

In both these instances the emphasis is on providing for deer and for the New Forest ponies.³⁸ Similarly, in Needwood Forest near

Burton-upon-Trent, William Pitt noted at the end of the eighteenth century that holly 'in great abundance, has been nursed up and encouraged in growth, I suppose, as winter provender for the deer'.³⁹ To the west, in Shropshire, is an unusual growth of the species at Stiperstones. It has been suggested that this is a relict holly plantation similar to those of the southern Pennines.⁴⁰ The Hollies is a stand of pollards estimated at 200 or more years old, and thus containing some of the most ancient holly trees in Britain. They seem to have been pollarded up to the middle of the nineteenth century. In parts of the Midlands, especially in Shropshire, hollies were often left in hedges for the cutting of browse and berries. 'Such trees are more frequent in the hedgerows surrounding the small fields associated with smallholdings than in the field boundaries of larger farm units'.⁴¹

Besides these last two locations, there is tantalizing evidence from Essex. Addy concludes from a 1222 record that cows and pigs were there sometimes fed on holly.⁴²

In pratis sunt ibi . xxvij . acre falcabiles et . xl . acre in pastura de holin . possunt esse ibi in pastura . xxx . vacce cum suis tauris et fetibus , et . v . sues cum suis verris et fetibus .

This reference to pigs seems to be singular. He notes, moreover, the recording of two payments at Beauchamp in 1181:

Golstanus et Herueius . j . hollinam pro xij d Robertus filius Alwini holemede pro xij d

reading both *hollinam* and *holemede* as 'holly pasture'.

Reference to a famous piece of Welsh literature is worth making here. The early

³⁵I Kershaw, *Bolton Priory: the economy of a northern Monastery, 1286-1325*, Oxford, 1973.

³⁶C R Tubbs, *The New Forest: an ecological history*, Newton Abbot, 1968. Both leaves and bark seem to be most palatable a day or two after cutting. He stresses also the feeding by ponies, deer and cattle on ivy and cut gorse. V Russell (*New Forest Ponies*, Newton Abbot, 1976) makes little mention of holly. The abundance of holly in the New Forest may be a fairly recent phenomenon (see Tubbs).

³⁷Cox, *op cit*, quoting a 1792 Commissioners' Report.

³⁸William Cobbett, during his younger years working at Farnham in the 1770s, apparently spent time grinding holly to make it more acceptable to domestic stock.

³⁹W Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Stafford*, 1st edn, 1796, quoted in E S Edees, *Flora of Staffordshire*, Newton Abbot, 1972.

⁴⁰G F Peterken, 'The Hollies, Stiperstones', *Shropshire Conservation Trust Bull.*, XI, 1967, pp 12-13.

⁴¹G F Peterken and P S Lloyd, 'Biological Flora of the British Isles. *Ilex aquifolium* L.', *J Ecol.*, LV, 1967, pp 841-58. Holly sometimes grows in very wet conditions, in Alder communities for example. At Stiperstones it is associated with *Sphagnum*.

⁴²O S Addy *Notes & Queries*, 8th ser, XI, p 304: for 'Domesday of St. Paul's' [1222] see *Camden Soc Trans.*, LIX, 1858. A further search of Essex material has not been attempted.

thirteenth-century tale *The Dream of Rhonabwy* includes an enlightening insight into medieval life.⁴³

And as they came towards the house, they could see a black old hall with a straight gable end, and smoke a-plenty from it. And when they came inside, they could see a floor full of holes and uneven. Where there was a bump upon it, it was with difficulty a man might stand thereon, so exceeding slippery was the floor with cows' urine and dung. Where there was a hole, a man might go over the ankle, what with the mixture of water and cow dung, and branches of holly a-plenty on the floor after the cattle had eaten off their tips.

Welsh records have not been sought; but it may be that this is a characteristic scene. The pure holly stands of the Black Mountain may also be relict hags.⁴⁴ In the Forest of Dean keepers cut holly for deer in winter, in at least the seventeenth century.

During the investigation into Sheffield area records several county and other archives were contacted, to see if there is other local documentation.⁴⁵ It appears that there is not. Durham, Northumberland, Lancashire, Calderdale, Huddersfield, Shropshire, Rutland, and Gwynedd in north Wales, apparently have no such records known. Reference to Cheshire documents of Macclesfield Forest has been made above. In addition, librarians of the Edinburgh Botanical Gardens and University of Wales Bangor College knew of no sources. The only material known to the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading was Radley's paper, which is also the only reference in a recent glossary of agrarian terms.⁴⁶ No further library or archive information has been forthcoming.

The known records cover a wide period. Documents of the late twelfth to the mid-eighteenth centuries contain references to rents, fines and agreements concerning the species. In the Sheffield archives records of the first half of the seventeenth century are especially well represented. The latest hollin

rental traced there is from 1737, although hollins were being 'stubbed' some decades before then. Pennant's reference to the use of holly in the Lake District is almost forty years later, and is the latest reference so far collected. The search has produced other late dates of 1556 for Bowland (with an indication of disusage), the 1570s for the Yorkshire Dales, and 1632 for Derbyshire for its use as a stock fodder. Its use for deer is continuing sporadically. Otherwise, it seems to be used — as are other plants — only as a last resort in emergencies, and its traditional use is almost forgotten. A request for information placed in leading British farming and countryside magazines and in several north Midlands newspapers in 1976 produced several interesting replies; but, although several referred to gorse and a few to ivy, none provided further evidence of the remembrance of this use of holly.

Too few dates are available here for an analysis of the decline of the practice. Two correlated conclusions, however, seem evident. First, the earliest date is southern; which may simply reflect the availability of early records. Second, not only are the latest references northern, but so are the majority of the records. The practice *seems* to have persisted longest in the northern uplands. The (apparent) absence of early printed references would support the conclusion that the use of holly as a fodder in southern England declined early, or has not been important there.

Whether or not this suggested trend correlates with agricultural changes is not clear. Improvements in swards, especially by the liming of base-poor soils, may account for the reduced significance of holly after the early seventeenth century. Many lowland areas were regularly limed from the later part of the sixteenth century onwards. As marling became counter-productive, lime was applied in some of the marginal grazing areas of the north-west Midlands and mid-Wales after the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁴⁷ A

⁴³In *The Mabinogion*, tr G Jones and T Jones, 1949.

⁴⁴H A Hyde, *Welsh Timber Trees*, Caerdydd, 1961.

⁴⁵By D J Smith.

⁴⁶T H Adams, *Agrarian Landscape Terms: a glossary for historical geography*, Inst Br Geog Special pub no 9, 1976.

⁴⁷E Kerridge *The Agricultural Revolution*, 1967.

Royal Society survey in 1664 found liming well used in both uplands and lowlands of North and East Yorkshire in about the period when southern Yorkshire hollins were being abandoned.⁴⁸

This decline in the importance of holly in the midlands and north almost certainly predates the period when the use of turnips became significant here. Although widely grown in the south-east by the last third of the seventeenth century, they appear not to have become popular in parts of the midlands and north until well into the eighteenth century.⁴⁹ Turnip cultivation appears to be recorded only rarely in the decades at the turn of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries: the first Yorkshire evidence is from 1691, and that for Northumberland is from the 1720s.⁵⁰

The evidence so far gathered suggests that the southern Pennines were a rather exceptional area, with their many late references. It does perhaps indicate, however, that the practice of feeding holly (and other woody species) to animals was once widespread and significant. Holly was especially important in the Sheffield area as winter fodder for sheep; although it was also fed to cattle, horses, and perhaps goats, and cut for red deer. In this respect, with the exception of the Lake District, the Sheffield records are unlike the better documented evidence elsewhere in England. Cattle, and in the New Forest ponies, are much more commonly mentioned than sheep. But the greatest number of references seem to be to deer. If an assessment of the significance of holly were to be made on the available information, it would be that its greatest importance was for park and 'forest' deer; that as a supplementary or emergency feed for domestic stock it was occasionally valuable; and that its use as a regular fodder for sheep was unusual. We

must note, besides this, that the majority of instances evidenced are from north of the Midlands.

In this respect, the Lancashire references, from an area historically important for cattle-raising, are interesting. Whereas the numerous, but individually probably fairly small, hags in the southern Pennines were sufficient reserves for supplying the local sheep flocks, in cattle areas a similar provisioning was probably not possible. In much of the north of England holly is rather slow-growing and subject to cutting back by frost. A large acreage would be necessary to provide a herd with more than a supplement to their diet or an emergency supply of forage.

One correspondent, a north Lancashire cattle farmer, regards holly as uneconomic as cattle fodder because of this: it (with other browse) would probably be important only after poor summers or in long periods of snow. Of course, a dense evergreen bush that can be eaten into provides excellent shelter. It is suggested that the stocking rate in that area was low enough to allow a surplus of *in situ* grass for most winters. Although they are derived from woodland animals, it has been estimated that in a totally forested area two square kilometres of browsing might support only 20 to 30 head of cattle.⁵¹ It is interesting in this context to note a January 1648 agreement in the Sheffield area, that a tenant have the use of a 'craggy corner where the Hollen grows', for pasturing '4 Beastes or 40 Sheep to Lady Day [March 25th] . . .'.⁵² Sheep, of course, are not part of a woodland fauna.

The recognition of holly as browse and loppings for deer is curiously patchy, in that, although the practice has obviously been important and widespread and is still used regularly in some parts of the country, many authorities do not mention its value. It has been suggested that the practice was so usual that reference to it was thought unnecessary,

⁴⁸J Thirsk and J P Cooper, *Seventeenth Century Economic Documents*, Oxford, 1972.

⁴⁹Kerridge, *op cit*.

⁵⁰Information provided by R Morgan, University of Reading (*The Root Crop in English Agriculture, 1650-1870*, unpublished PhD thesis, 1978).

⁵¹J G Evans, *The Environment of Early Man in Britain*, 1975.

⁵²Sheffield City Libraries, Ronskley Collection 156, no 4320.

although specific mention of other woody species and general references to browsewood are common.⁵³ Shirley, Whitaker, and Whitehead make no specific mention of holly, for example.⁵⁴ The many other incidental references make this documentation ambiguous.

In some areas, holly was encouraged especially for deer. At Cranborne, on the Wiltshire-Dorset border, 'ridings through the whole of the Chase [were] planted on both sides with various evergreens as browse for support of the deer in winter'.⁵⁵ According to modern observations⁵⁶ holly, together with many other woody plants, often features in the winter diets of roe and fallow deer (the latter were probably introduced to Britain by the Normans); and, with introduced conifers, can be an important winter food of red deer, the stags of which sometimes break off branches of browse with their antlers. Its importance may be greatest for the red deer. One study of roe deer suggests a preference for brambles and conifers; but that 'if the winter is severe, bramble becomes scarce and ivy and holly are sought'.⁵⁷

III

To what extent was holly an important fodder? In the Sheffield area, it was important enough to establish at least two terms in the local vocabulary. Hunter notes that 'a *hag* of *hollin* was the holly trees growing upon a certain portion of ground in the commons of the manor of Sheffield. The lord was accustomed to let or sell them by the hag',⁵⁸

and the term *hag(g)*, meaning an enclosure, a boundary hedge, or a portion of woodland, especially one marked for felling,⁵⁹ was often used locally to refer to 'hollin hags'. There is still a rash of *hag* names in the north Derbyshire Hope Woodlands. The word *hollins* seems itself to have been used as a collective term for such a cluster of hollies. With echoes of Hunter, the *English Dialect Dictionary* defines *hollin rent* as 'payment for holly trees growing in a certain part of the common of the manor of Sheffield'.⁶⁰

Hol(l)in or *hol(l)ing(e)* occurs extensively in England and in English. *Hag* and its many variants such as *hay* and *hague*, is rather more widespread, and has a multitude of nuances. Both are frequent in toponyms, especially field-names and minor place-names. ME *hol(l)in* is itself a modification of OE *holegn*. Both *hol(l)in* and *holi* forms occur from before 1200, with the former perhaps the more widespread and more frequent. Although *hollin(g)* forms persist in some northern and scottice dialects, *holly* became predominant after about the early sixteenth century. Variants *hollen*, (*hullen*), and *holm(e)*⁶¹ also remain: New Forest holly clumps, for instance, are commonly called 'holly holms' or 'holms' (as well as 'hats').⁶² OE *holegn* is cognate with Welsh *celyn* (and the Cumbrian and Cornish) and Gaelic *collin*, which also feature frequently as toponyms. (*Coll* meaning hazel is likewise represented.)

Several medieval Latin terms seem to translate as 'holly': *hus*, *huis*, *hussus*, and *husseiam* are scattered in documents. Medieval Latin also seems to have *hol(l)ina* for 'hole-/holimede' (although this English term is apparently localized), and *huissartum* for 'an area cleared of holly'.⁶³

⁵³I am grateful to F J Taylor Page of the British Deer Society for his comments and the references to deer management.

⁵⁴E P Shirley, *Some Account of the English Deer Parks with Notes on the Management of Deer*, 1867; J Whitaker, *Descriptive List of the Deer Parks and Paddocks of England*, 1892; G K Whitehead, *Deer and their Management in Deer Parks of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1950.

⁵⁵W Chafin, *Anecdotes respecting Cranbourne Chase*, 1818.

⁵⁶Eg G B Corbet and H N Southern (eds), *Handbook of British Mammals*, Oxford, 2nd edn, 1977.

⁵⁷R Prior and A McDiarmid, *The Roe Deer of Cranbourne Chase: an ecological survey*, 1968.

⁵⁸J Hunter, *Hallamshire Glossary*, 1829.

⁵⁹The etymology of *hag(g)* is confounded by the assimilation of a second meaning of 'to cut back, to hack'. See eg *New English Dictionary*; *Scottish National Dictionary*; S M Kuhn and J Reidy, *Middle English Dictionary*, Ann Arbor, 1963.

⁶⁰J Wright (ed), 1898-1905.

⁶¹Another meaning of *holm*, a river islet or flat ground by a river, is more prevalent. *Holm* occasionally means Elm in some northern districts.

⁶²Tubbs, *op cit*.

⁶³See eg Addy, 1858, loc cit.

Spray and Smith show that south Yorkshire and north Derbyshire are littered with place-names commemorative of holly and hags. A casual examination of detailed maps of several other parts of England suggest that — although they are especially frequent in the southern Pennines — this is not exceptional. In order to see the likely extent to which holly has been sufficiently notable to be used in place-names, a systematic search of the Ordnance Survey one-inch sheets for England was made.⁶⁴ These were independently scanned twice for all names containing the elements *holly/ies*, *holling(g)/s*, and close variants. *Holm(e)* was not included because of its confusing homophone. This perhaps leaves parts of southern England under-represented. Similarly, because of their mixed etymologies, *hag* names were not surveyed. Besides this, there are, of course, at least two major disadvantages in such a method. At this small scale, maps include relatively few names: field names, for instance, are not recorded. Compound names, moreover, with *hollin* or *holly* as a second or subsequent element, are likely to be missed, however attuned the eye may be. It is very likely that, despite the cross-checking, a number of names were overlooked. This, however, is true of all the sheets examined, so the omissions will probably be fairly evenly scattered. One likely advantage of this method is that the maps probably contain relatively few very modern place-names and thus represent the pattern derived from early namings. The results of this search are shown in Fig 1.

The map shows two rather different distributions. That of the *holly* names is widespread. The names are never very dense, although there is a clustering between the southernmost foothills of the Pennine chain and the Welsh Marches. The pattern of *hollin(g)* names is different in three respects:

the names are not so widely scattered; they tend to be concentrated in the northern uplands (although relatively scarce *holling* has a southern bias); and they are virtually absent from the eastern lowlands. In view of the evidence for the importance of holly in the New Forest, it is interesting that Fig 1 shows few place-names from that area. A search of larger-scale maps revealed little further commemoration. An examination of the biology of holly, below, will consider the scarceness in the east, where the plant was perhaps noted for its novelty.

It is not pretended that Fig 1 is a very accurate record of the distribution of holly place-names. It is, however, probably acceptable as a general picture. Nor is it pretended that there is any rigid distinction between *hollin(g)* and *holly* names. Dialect differences have not been investigated; and many of the names must have simply been 'updated' — for instance an Essex *Holly Wood* was first recorded in 1342 as *Hullenwode*, and Sheffield's *Hollin Lane* officially became *Holly Lane* in 1830. Moreover, there are some names which are not commemorative of the plant: Warwickshire *Holly Stiches* and Nottinghamshire *Holly Gate* were *hollow syches* (a stream) and *hollow gate* (road). The English Place-Name Society's county volumes were examined and as many such spurious names eliminated as possible; but doubtless some remain in Fig 1. These inaccuracies notwithstanding, the main holly place-names in England are concentrated in the north and North Midlands, away from the lowlands and more fertile soils; and a majority of them are probably older than the names given after *holly* became widespread as the received name for the species.

If the evidence of place-names is not altogether trustworthy, the pattern presented in Fig 2 is highly dubious. It does make, however, an interesting comparison with Fig 1. The map shows the frequency of *Holly* and *Hollin(g)* surnames in several parts of the country. The data were gathered by counting personal entries in 29 of the 1972

⁶⁴England is covered by 100 sheets of the 7th series. The Scottish border region seems to have very few holly names. *The Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland* (ed F H Groome, 1894–95) includes no *hollin* place-names, and only one or two of *holly*.



FIGURE 1

Distribution of Hollin, Holling and Holly place-names on one inch to one mile Ordnance Survey maps of England
The map shows Hollin (stars), Holling (barred stars) and Holly (disc) names, together with the 400 ft contour and areas of calcareous rocks (stippled).

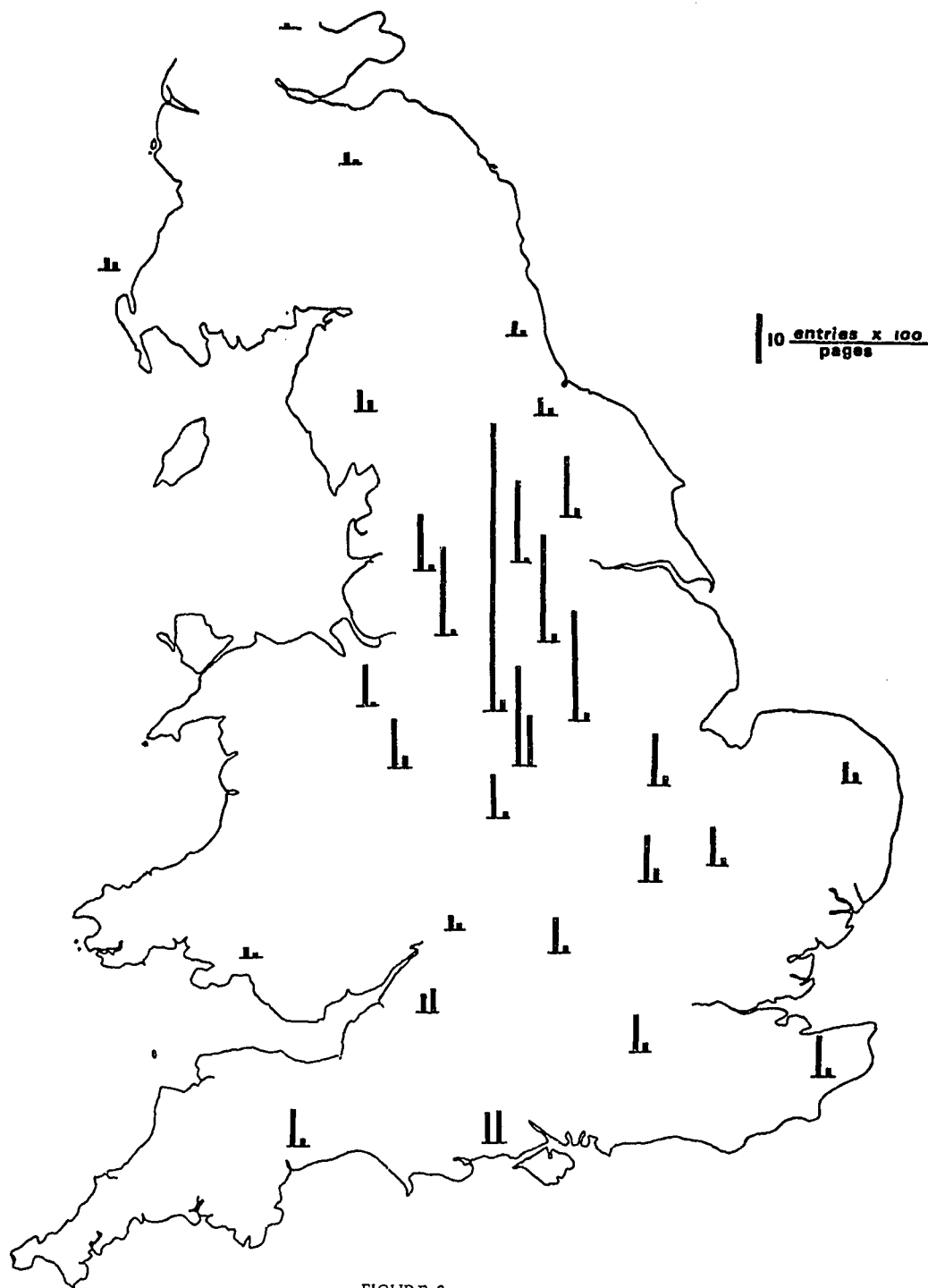


FIGURE 2

Holly surnames

Left-hand bars show Hollin and Holling names, right-hand bars show Holly names, represented in 29 telephone directory areas. The histograms originate approximately in the centres of the directory areas. The length of bar shows $\frac{\text{number of entries} \times 100}{\text{number of pages}}$. The scale indicates 10 units.

number of pages

issues of the Post Office telephone directories. The method is crude; but it is occasionally used as it allows standardized samples to be gathered. Only names in which *holly/holling* was the sole or first element were investigated: a number of infrequent possible variants were excluded because of uncertain origins. It is immediately obvious that in the north Midlands, Yorkshire and Lancashire, there is a marked abundance of *Hollin(g)* surnames. The *Holly* names, presumably generally the more recent, are nowhere especially common. Both forms seem to be very infrequent in Cumbria and the north-east. Indeed, the general pattern is not dissimilar from that in Fig 1 with a slight southern shift.

IV

There is good evidence that holly was once much more abundant in Britain and perhaps throughout Europe. Pollen analyses show that in the Boreal period (c7600–5500 BC) there were large amounts of the species in Britain and Ireland.⁶⁵ Historically it seems to have had a greater abundance than at present.⁶⁶ However, it is probably not native over the whole of Britain. The distribution map in the *Atlas of the British Flora* shows that in much of the eastern lowlands of England it is probably an introduction.⁶⁷ In the Northumbrian and Scottish uplands, as well as along parts of the east coast, it is fairly scarce. It is perhaps commoner in the more

oceanic west of Britain; although it also occurs commonly in the drier south-east. It grows on a variety of substrates, from peat and acid soils to chalk. Conditions above 1000 ft are inhospitable for holly. Although it grows in west Scotland up to about 1700 ft (520 m), and in the southern Pennines to 1650 ft (520 m), we know from Scandinavian studies,⁶⁸ and from British work,⁶⁹ that holly is limited in the north and east of Britain, as well as at the higher altitudes, by low temperatures: it does not fruit well and often suffers frost damage, and it grows slowly in these adverse conditions.

Holly rarely forms woodland in Britain. There are, however, some small stands whose origin and successional status are not clear.⁷⁰ Some of these we can now see clearly as derelict hags. Probably, also, the clustering of holly as an understorey in some of the northern and western oak-birch woodland, and in many areas of scrubland, represents old hags that have been overtaken by derelict coppice or incoming tree species. The Sheffield area furnishes many such instances. Other likely examples are scattered further north in the Pennines, parts of Scotland, Cumbria and mid-Wales, and doubtless elsewhere. Holly is fairly long-lived; and evidence that many of these have been managed stands is shown in the form of the plants themselves. Here, they are characteristically bushes rather than trees. Some, for example those of Stiperstones, are old pollards. Many northern examples have been coppiced — and, judging by their rather amorphous forms, frequently.

If the name distribution in Fig 1 is examined ecologically (and disregarding the Celtic areas⁷¹), it is clear that holly has been

⁶⁵ Godwin, *op cit.*

⁶⁶ H M Fitzpatrick ('Trees of Ireland — native and introduced', *Sci Proc Roy Dublin Soc*, XX, 1933, pp 597–656) suggests this for Ireland.

⁶⁷ F H Perring and S M Walters, 1962. The species' caption contains an error, and should distinguish between 'recorded and probable introductions' and 'all other records'. The incomplete map of the distribution and frequency of the species in *hedges* by G F Peterken (*Watsonia*, X, 1975, pp 297–9; and an earlier version in E Pollard *et al*, *Hedges*, 1974) shows a scarceness in a belt running SW from Humberside and the fens through the Midlands; and greatest abundance S and SW of this belt, in Norfolk, SE Wales around the Black Mountains, the Welsh Marches, parts of N and NE Yorkshire.

⁶⁸ J Iversen '*Viscum, Hedera and Ilex* as climatic indicators', *Geol För Stockh Förh*, LXVI, 1944, pp 463–83.

⁶⁹ Peterken and Lloyd, *loc cit.*

⁷⁰ A G Tansley, *op cit.*

⁷¹ W H Pearsall ('Place-names as clues in the pursuit of ecological history', *Namn och Bygd*, XLIX, 1961, pp 72–89), examining the first three of the English Place-Name Society's volumes on Cumbria, found very few holly/hollin toponyms — and made no interpretations from them.

commemorated largely in northern and western districts, generally on non-calcareous substrates (even in the north), and almost entirely at altitudes greater than 400 ft (120 m). Most of these areas correspond with acidic, shallow and rather infertile soils, which have for many centuries carried vegetation types which offer very little bite — and where winter fodder would normally be scarce. They are concentrated in areas historically important for both sheep and cattle. The emptiness of the eastern lowlands corresponds well with the suspect distribution shown in the *Atlas of the British Flora*. The majority of low altitude names are of holly forms.

V

When the name distribution demonstrated for the Sheffield area is examined more closely and with reference to the ecology of holly, several relationships with local topography and geology are apparent.⁷² The names are mostly concentrated on the Millstone Grits and Coal Measure sandstones and shales. There is a particular concentration on the valley slopes of the Don and its tributaries, and of the Derwent and Ashop. No names were found in a search of 6 in maps (this does not mean that they do not occur . . .) on the Carboniferous Limestone; and there are few on the Magnesian Limestone and Bunter deposits. In the calcareous areas, and especially on the Magnesian Limestone, winter grass forage is much more abundant than on the acidic substrates.

There seem to be three correlations with topographic features. Almost all the mapped sites lie above the 400 ft (120 m) contour. Few lie above 1400 ft (430 m). Land below 400 ft is largely to the east of the survey area. In the Pennine foothills it is associated with valley bottoms which have been used for grassland and some arable farming. More holly toponyms seem to be associated with

moderate slopes than with steep or level ground. The steeper slopes would be rather inhospitable to holly on some of the substrates because of their unstable soils; and a high proportion of the steeper ground is, of course, at higher altitudes. Gentler slopes are associated with the valley bottoms and the eastern lowlands. It is interesting to note, bearing in mind holly's sensitivity to frost, that the microclimate of a valley side is often warmer in cold periods than the top or bottom of the slope.⁷³ In north Derbyshire, in the Ashop, Hope and Edale Valleys, valley bottom temperatures are often 5–8°C lower than at points only a little way up the slopes.⁷⁴ In this area there is a slight tendency for farmsteads to be situated at mid-slope positions.⁷⁵ That frost pockets and exposed areas of hillsides should be avoided is well known to holly growers in North America — where berries and leaves are gathered for decoration.⁷⁶ Iversen has demonstrated that holly at the foot or head of a slope is more likely to be damaged by frost than at a 'safe' mid-slope point.⁷⁷

Finally, holly names seem to be associated with the warmer aspects (the direction in which the ground faces). Aspect data for holly toponyms in the Sheffield region and in mid- and north-east Yorkshire were gathered. Both indicate a slight preponderance of names on south-west-facing slopes. This same bias, for both place-names and holly-rich woods, has been suspected also in the Forest of Bowland.⁷⁸ Such aspects, of course, are favoured throughout Britain; and it is not surprising to learn that in the same Derbyshire valleys noted above settlements — especially the oldest farms — are situated conspicuously at mid-slope southerly or

⁷³R Geiger, *The Climate near the Ground*, 3rd edn, tr M N Stewart, Cambridge, USA, 1950.

⁷⁴A Garnett in D L Linton (ed), *Sheffield and its Region*, Sheffield, 1956.

⁷⁵K C Edwards, *The Peak District*, 1962.

⁷⁶J F Thompson 'Holly orchards could yield red gold', *The Grower*, 8 June, 1963, pp 1158–9.

⁷⁷Loc cit.

⁷⁸Arthur Lord, pers comm.

⁷²Spray and Smith, loc cit.

south-westerly positions.⁷⁹ Although a systematic examination of holly growing in this same area has not been carried out, observation tends to confirm the names distribution pattern in the Ewden and Derwent-Ashop Valleys. However, modern developments, especially afforestation, make investigation difficult.

It is not pretended that all the names plotted in Fig 1 represent locations where there was a significant fodder plant. A correlation, however, is assumed. In the southern Pennine survey nearly all the *hollin* and many of the *hagg* names (gathered from 6 in OS maps, and various plans of larger scales) are demonstrable or likely candidates. Here holly is commemorated in just those locations where its nurturing would be especially valuable to stock. It seems likely that, bearing in mind the geographical distribution of the earlier names evident in Fig 1 this correlation is probably widespread in the *hollin(g)* toponym distribution.

⁷⁹Edwards, op cit.

A past value as fodder, of course, is not the only reason why *hollin(g)* and *holly* names are frequent in some areas. The plant often provides distinctive landmarks; and it yields traditional Yuletide symbols (now Christianized decorations). Many farmers still regard holly highly as *shelter*, both for cattle and for sheep — better shelter than other bushes and trees because it is dense, evergreen, and nutritious.

This significance of holly has been commented upon by a number of correspondents, whereas the memory of its fodder value is (except for deer) virtually non-existent.⁸⁰ Indeed, although farmers in south Wales, the Midlands and the north of England drew attention to the historical importance of gorse as winter provender, only one appreciated holly, and that only from occasional observations of a browsing 'boredom habit' of individual cows. Southern Pennine farmers, indeed, seem to have forgotten their ancestors' husbandry completely.

⁸⁰See M Hartley and J Ingilby *Life in the Moorlands of North-East Yorkshire*, 1972, for an exception.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

(continued from page 96)

The Treasurer reported another satisfactory year, and thanked Miss Beazley and Mr Casey for their work. The dual effect of economies in printing the *Review* and increased revenues from sales, conferences, and from monies on deposit had been to enable the Society to extend its publication activity. An enlarged edition of the *Review* would soon be forthcoming, and the Society could afford to explore the possibility of publishing supplements or making further joint publications. Copies of Dr Raine Morgan's bibliography, *Dissertations on British Agrarian History*, just published jointly with the University of Reading, were available at the conference.

The Editor reported on the continuing backlog of long articles awaiting publication, and a satisfactory flow of submissions during the year. Of more concern was the long delay in the publication of the *Review* through problems at the press which he hoped would not recur.

The meeting expressed its thanks to the Warden and staff of the college and to the Secretary for the conference arrangements.

WINTER CONFERENCE 1981

The Winter Conference will be held on Saturday 5 December 1981 at the Polytechnic of Central London, New Cavendish Street, on the theme 'Government Policy and Agriculture'. A booking form with full details of the programme is inserted into this issue of the *Review*. Any enquiries should be addressed to Dr Dennis Baker, Christ Church College, Canterbury, Kent.

SPRING CONFERENCE 1982

The Spring Conference in 1982 will be held at St Andrews as previously announced but at a slightly later date. The conference will be held at Hamilton Hall, the University of St Andrews, 5-7 April 1982. The programme with booking forms will appear in the next issue of the *Review* but the Secretary would welcome suggestions on the programme.

The Origin of Farming

By G E FUSSELL

IT can confidently be asserted that the history a man writes depends upon the circumstances and constitution of the society he lives in. A society like this of modern times wherein the financial nexus is of the first importance necessarily deals in economic history, the history of getting and spending. As Ecclesiastes puts it (X.19), a feast is made for laughter and wine maketh merry but money answereth all things. In an earlier society the story of the warrior class, royalty and aristocracy, and that of the most important part of society was characterized, and partly still is, by consideration of the political elements to the exclusion of the majority, the workers, the producers, the traders, and such like.

The earliest of the writers on the history of farming were the eighteenth-century contributors to such publications as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and other similar productions; Edmund Rack in the publications of the Bath and West Society, 1788; an anonymous writer who contributed to the first number of the *Farmer's Magazine*, 6 Jan 1800, a new production from Edinburgh; the *London Encyclopaedia*, 1810; and the *New Royal Encyclopaedia* issued about 1820. And there were others! The range of these publications through time is some fifty years and since there is a rather remarkable agreement between them, though expressed in different words, the assumption may be made that what they published was, generally speaking, acceptable.

What was the basis of agreement? Christianity, if not practised, was the general profession of the western world though there were some singular varieties of this belief. All the same there was, and in some few places

still is, an acceptance of the historical pronouncements of the Pentateuch. They were implicit in the history of farming that was written for the several encyclopaedias published in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, few of which have survived until the present day with the notable exception of the *Britannica* and *Chambers*. But not to put too fine a point upon it: it is in these encyclopaedias that agricultural history, as such, was born. Possibly it is not the history that would be acceptable in this far too critical an age, but for all that these contributions were the birth pangs of a new approach to the history of mankind. What was it?

It was implicit belief in the Scriptures — an understood thing for centuries almost beyond counting; and coupled with this was the acceptance that 'The antiquity of this art is beyond that of all others; for we are informed by Scripture that Adam was sent from the Garden of Eden to *till the ground*, and this being the case he must certainly have known how to do so.'¹

This was a sentiment that was multiplied by several authors whether contributors to encyclopaedias or to separate and individual publications. The contributor to the *London Encyclopaedia* of 1810 who wrote the article on *Husbandry* regretted with some solemnity the lack of improvement in farming practice since Biblical times, and with a rather (or so it sounds) hypocritical tear in his eye. 'In a profession of such high antiquity it is wonderful that so little improvement has been made; particularly when we reflect that *man* was so early and impressively admonished that

¹*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol IX, 1797, art, 'Agriculture'.

this was the only truly permanent mode on which he was to depend for bread and the support of human life', citing 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread; thorns and thistles shall bring it forth to thee and thou shalt eat in the heat of the field . . .' Plenty has smiled around their dwellings — a rather optimistic pronouncement.²

Another early nineteenth-century contributor to encyclopaedic knowledge, writing upon the *History and progress of agriculture* used different words to say much the same. 'Agriculture,' he wrote, 'unquestionably has been practised to the remote ages of the world', a statement it is impossible to disagree with. 'As mankind advanced from a state of nature their necessities increased and invention made improvements upon spontaneous vegetation', which is an acceptable theory even today, though this writer has his doubts. 'The mode of culture used in the antediluvian world we must leave to the investigations of those who are resolved to say something on every subject, and rather than be silent fill up the chasm with idle conjecture',³ a sentiment which I heartily endorse!

These people and others who will be quoted had a substantial belief in their precepts and the code founded upon literature that for a couple of thousand years has been estimated as inspired. Somebody has written a modern book on *The Bible as history*. Our ancestors would not have needed such a book. They were sure it was!

Others than the encyclopaedists began at this time to discuss the subject. Prominent among these was Edmund Rack, the founder of the Bath and West of England Society. One of the early activities of the society was the publication of a series of 'Letters and Papers'. To these Rack contributed in 1788⁴ a long essay on the origin of farming. It

pretended to an encyclopaedic knowledge of the origin and progress of agriculture in different ages and nations. Rack was not troubled by any of the modern uncertainty. Belief in his day was established upon a sure foundation. The base was Holy Writ: next the classics and the legends about earlier times. Rack could write with authority because he had no doubt that what he wrote was true.

Nearly always there is a precursor to any credo, and this is as true of agricultural history as of any other subject or purpose. In England alone there had been some rather trivial observations on this subject by the writers of farming textbooks in addition to the more formal and exhaustive contributions to encyclopaedias. The learned and unlearned writers of farming textbooks, an occupation that expanded in the eighteenth century, often prefaced their works with a pseudo-history of their subject although this was always synoptic, and before all an acceptable essay founded, as Rack's work was, on biblical and classical quotation.

Although many of his ideas about the origin and history of farming are now thought to be illusory, he had no conception of the modern minimal significance, in the economic sense, of food production when prosperity appears to rest on the production of the inorganic and mechanical articles supplied with an included obsolescence. With some appearance of justice he believed that his views were shared by the ancients, which is not unlikely because his were derived from theirs. 'The earth', he said, 'was considered by the ancients as Mother of Plenty', an incontrovertible truth today as then. In his own time he knew that agriculture was 'the basis of our public wealth and the happiness of numberless individuals', which must be differently expressed today.

Few men can escape or even expand the mental habits and environment of the times in which they live — a ponderous truism. Rack was no exception to this general rule which binds us all. Reasonably enough he remarked

²London Encyclopaedia, 1810, art, 'Husbandry'.

³New Royal Encyclopaedia, c1820. 'History and progress of agriculture'.

⁴(Edmund Rack) 'An essay on the origin and progress of agriculture in different ages', *Letters & Papers on Agriculture*, Bath & West Soc, 2nd edn, II, 1788, pp 310-44.

that 'the art of tilling, cultivating and improving the earth, so as to render it fruitful, claims the precedency of all other arts in point of antiquity as well as dignity. It was man's original employment in the primeval age of happiness and peace', a situation in which man has never found himself though our ancestors believed in an age of gold. Here he neglects the age of food gathering, which indeed was not recognized at that time.

The evidence for these economic conditions was then the Bible, in the factual truth of which there was in his day and for long after no suspicion of doubt. It was the biblical character, the father of the human race, Adam, 'who instructed his children', for Cain became the first husbandman and Abel the first shepherd; but alas these favourable conditions for humanity were obliterated by the Flood, which washed out every vestige of human art from the earth. Humanity must make a new beginning, and in the intervening thousands of years had brought food production to its then state of perfection.

Rack, like most of his contemporaries, believed in the descent rather than the ascent of man. For him the Old Testament, with all its bloody murders, described a golden age, though a careful reading of these holy books shows that in those days no man could trust his neighbour. There was a certainty in the beliefs of Rack's day that must have been very supporting. He believed, a belief that has long been shared, that 'the Chaldeans who inhabited the country where agriculture had its birth [a credo still largely accepted] carried that useful art to a degree of excellence unknown in former times' — no very surprising event as men are continually improving their processes.

Men achieve popularity by subscribing to the currently held beliefs of their time. Rack was a conformist, profitably. He was also a widely read man in the terms of his day. When, in the succession of events he related, the Flood took place is not clear from Rack's narrative, but according to him it was the

descendants of Noah who settled in Europe and carried agriculture with them.

Rack was not alone in his beliefs, which were a generally acceptable record of probable or possible events, the series of which could not be doubted. This was emphasized by the writer of the introduction to the first number of a new *Farmer's Magazine* that was instituted in Scotland in the year 1800.⁵ The introduction was history, and was inclined to emphasize the then modern state of farming as a long progression from the primitive. Its true feeling can only be given by rather elaborate quotation.

Like others of these early writers this anonymous writer opened his exegesis with a protestation that 'Agriculture is of such antiquity as to be coeval with the first formation of society', which the archaeologists of today would doubt. 'Accordingly in the remotest ages and amongst every people of whom we have any authentic history we find the cultivation of the earth the principal employment of the inhabitants, and by all of them held in such veneration as to have its origin ascribed to some deity or other.' Egyptians, Osiris; Phoenicians, Dagon; Greeks, Bacchus; Chinese, Ho Fi. This writer made speculations about the changes men made in their habits as their modified environment required. Only a long quotation can illustrate what he thought, which was really rather different from earlier, and some subsequent, writers. His idea was that the thousands of years of hunting may have led to a shortage of animals (of the chase), which is rather unlikely. Consequently other forms of nutrient had to be sought. 'The different kinds of fruit and herbs would in all probability, be first had recourse to' as an addition to former resources. Again, 'they would soon perceive that both the milk and the flesh of animals were improved by good feed in winter', a magnificent improbability. This unlikely observation 'would naturally lead to cutting and preserving green herbage

⁵ *The Farmer's Magazine*, 6 Jan 1800, Introduction.

for the purpose', hence the origin of hay. 'The cultivation of grain and other crops now in use belongs to a more advanced state of society' in his opinion, 'and many ages must have elapsed before men who were destitute of any other helps than those derived from experience and observation could attain even an imperfect knowledge of Agriculture. The sacred writings inform us that Noah understood Husbandry; of course he taught it to his descendants and as it is one of those arts which, when known, the wants of man will for ever prevent from being lost we may naturally conclude that it has continued its course, with various progress, from that period to the present day', a remark that does credit to a penetrating intelligence. He was convinced that 'to the introduction of Agriculture we are indebted for that dignified place now held by man in the scale of created beings', a caustic comment upon the faith of our ancestors.

Some twenty-five years later another Scotsman, handicapped by several physical disabilities but of indomitable courage and inexhaustible industry, included in his *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, 1825, an elaborate series of essays on the 'History of agriculture among ancient and modern nations'. 'The origin of agriculture', wrote Loudon, 'has been sought by many philosophers in natural circumstances. Man in his rudest state they consider would first live on roots and fruit, afterwards hunting and fishing (thus reversing the theories of his slightly earlier compatriot), 'next to the pasturage of animals, and lastly to all of these he would add the raising of crops. Tillage or the cultivation of the soil for this purpose is supposed to have been first practised in imitation of the effects produced by the sand and mud left by the inundation of rivers. . . . This hypothesis seems supported by the traditions and natural circumstances of Egypt and some renowned men, Sir Isaac Newton and Benjamin Stillingfleet therefore considered corn was first cultivated on the banks of the Nile', irrefragable authorities as these two men then were.

But there was a limitation. 'Traditional history traces men back to the time of the deluge. After that catastrophe of which the greater part of the earth's surface bears evidence, man seems to have recovered himself in the central parts of Asia, and to have attained to eminence in arts and government on the alluvial plain of the Nile', when Greece, Carthage and some other places on the Mediterranean were colonized: but Loudon was forced to admit that in his day the history of agriculture amongst the nations of what may be called classical antiquity was involved in impenetrable obscurity. 'Very few facts,' he wrote 'are recorded previously to the time of the Romans.'

The subject was greatly expanded, verbally, but with little or no new results of any consequence by contributors to a new magazine, *The Plough* that was started in 1846. Four essays on the subject appeared in the two volumes issued in that year.⁶ The first two of these were written by the Professor of Agriculture at a school for teaching farming that had been set up at Hoddesdon, Herts. He was a voluminous contributor to the agricultural literature of his time; but alas his theory of the origin of the processes involved in the cultivation of crops was just as naïve as that of his predecessors. Like all voluminous writers, Donaldson was apt to repeat himself in separate and successive essays. 'No people have yet been discovered', he wrote, that did not possess some method of stirring the earth for the purpose of promoting a renovated and more vigorous vegetation, and tools and implements of some shape or form for the purpose of effecting the pulverisation they found necessary. . . . Materials are wanting from which to compile a contemporary history of the progress made in the art of cultivating the earth from the rude practice of the remotest antiquity or the most savage barbarians to the most perfect cultivation of the present day. Even the earliest stages of our own practice we are left almost wholly to conjecture.

⁶John Donaldson, 'A notice of agriculture ancient and modern', *The Plough. A journal of agricultural affairs*, Jan-June, 1846; 'Aratorium or cultivation of lands'; *ibid*; Anon, 'On the philosophy of agriculture', *ibid*; Anon, 'The history of agriculture and agricultural associations', *ibid* July-Dec 1846.

But he had the odd and unlikely idea that 'It is very consistent with reason and quite consonant with analogy [an unlikely basis for history!] to suppose that the cultivation of the earth originated in observations of the better growth of vegetation on land that was stirred and pulverised'; and some other remarks suggest he was, perhaps not consciously, a man with slightly Darwinian ideas, but he had what are now thought of as erroneous thoughts because he believed that no people had yet been discovered that were totally ignorant of the simple art, which modern archaeologists would be loth to accept. He thought the practice of cultivating the earth in some way or other might be considered as coeval with the existence of man: a highly dubious pronouncement, but he went on once more in a then very orthodox way. Only quotation can justify this!

In the Eastern countries where Scripture and tradition place the first appearance of man, and where the arts and sciences were first cradled into existence and brought into use, we find that agriculture formed a primary object of attention in order to support that dense population of those fertile regions [but also] of the rural economy even of the most civilized nations of antiquity we are almost wholly ignorant.

Little was written about farming, but much about battles and sieges, havoc and murder, which unfortunately, he wrote, occupied the attention of the human race and formed the subject of record with historians. . . . 'From the age of Moses almost down to the commencement of the Christian era, though something may be gleaned of incidental notions in the Scriptures' there is nothing very explicit.⁷ What is explicit is that inevitably there must be a great deal of repetition in this essay if only because the Victorian writers themselves engaged in demonstrating clearly the persistence of ideas at least 2000 years old.

'Man is an omnivorous animal,' wrote the anonymous author of the essay *On the philosophy of agriculture*, 'his masticatory and digestive organs have been so constructed by

the Almighty that he is supported by a compound nutriment of animal and vegetable diet', the result being that he had to practice farming. 'In fact,' he said confidentially, 'Holy Writ informs us that agriculture is the most ancient science in existence for Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a tiller of the ground.' This is a very pious writer, naïvely delightful, but he thought the theory of farming had been strangely neglected. It could be enquired whether theory is necessary when practice produces the goods?

The final contributor to the periodical, at least on this subject, succeeded in producing only the first chapter of his project: but he was a man without doubts. 'Agriculture is indisputably the most ancient of all the arts and sciences. Its history is coeval with the history of man; for no sooner was the mighty work of creation completed than Adam was placed in the garden of Eden to dress and keep it. (Gen.II.15).'

This man had the accepted canon well in mind. The Flood formed a boundary between the ancient wisdom and the new, an idea that was often propounded by the nineteenth-century writers of farming history; but nobody knew how the antediluvians farmed, although the amazing length of their lives must have given them opportunities of development denied to we pygmies of a briefer span. Doubtless the Deluge washed out, in a more than figurative sense, the wisdom of these learned ancients such as Methuselah. But Noah and his sons came to the rescue. 'Within two years after that event we read that "Noah began to be an husbandman and planted a vineyard" (Gen.IX.20).'

He had a nice sense of priorities! This learned writer was aware of the legendary history that revealed the origins of farming. After 2247 BC farming was chiefly practised in the east by the Chaldeans, and after 1804 BC the prophet Isaac found a refuge from famine in Phoenicia. The Egyptians were fortunate in their farming. The Israelites after their settlement in Palestine, 1450 BC, began farming. Both India and Persia are celebrated

⁷Eg, Isaiah, XVIII, 24-8: 1 Kings XIX, 19-21.

for the respect they paid to agriculture. In India Bacchus planted a vineyard, a commendable process and an indication of priorities. Ceres was worshipped as a goddess in Sicily. He then proceeds to Mago the Carthaginian and other conventional documentation; but he failed to continue his history after the first instalment.

There is a degree of orthodoxy about all this that was characteristic of so much Victorian thought, and indeed of all thought, because it is largely the result of consultation with the accepted and traditional way of thinking. John Sherer put it rather differently from most of these writers.⁸ 'The cultivation of a garden was the only occupation of our first parents in Paradise: and from that hour to this it has been considered even by those whose position is such as to have placed one within reach of their power, to be the purest of human employments', an unexceptionable sentiment.

John Chalmers Morton, a prolific writer in the mid-nineteenth century, was rather more of a cynic.⁹ 'We are familiar in almost every treatise on the art', he wrote, 'with an opening announcement of its antiquity and of its importance to mankind. . . .' But the antiquity of an art was in his opinion no measure of criterion of its advancement. The assertions of primeval origin conveyed little more significance to the mind that if made of the earth itself — a piece of pleasing contempt. To this production C Wren Hoskyns contributed the history and general philosophy of the subject. He had already written a separate work about it, which was surprisingly enough quite in the orthodox vein of the epoch.

At this point of time John Donaldson made a further contribution, possibly in an attempt to consolidate his reputation — which it certainly did.¹⁰ He, like others, proceeded

along the road from prehistory, a word he would probably have not recognized, to his own day. The book was intended to be technical instruction, or so it seems to the modern reader: but the writer, like his contemporaries, must deal with origins. 'History,' he wrote accurately enough for his day, 'affords little or no information on the subject of the performance of an art which is the very first in value and consequence to the human race.' Indeed without it the people perish! 'Nations are very considerably advanced in civilization before they made written records of any kind and they have progressed much further before any mention is made of agriculture. . . . The early historians . . . contributed with the bare relation of the facts', but nothing about causes — a contention to which it is possible to subscribe without reservation.

Donaldson's ideas had not changed since he began to write. He believed in what is now perhaps the accepted canon, of food gathering and the cultivation of grains which were in use before the commencement of history. There are, as he recognized, incidental notices in Holy Writ, but nothing that illuminates the methods of farming and food production. To his mind the agriculture of the ancients so far as it could then be known, was described in Dickson's book called *The Agriculture of the Ancients*, a production published in two volumes in 1788, which is in some sort correct, subject to certain reservations — Dickson's ancients being mainly the classical writers.

Samuel Copland, who wrote a massive two-volume work in 1866,¹¹ had nothing to add to the conjectures of his predecessors. Lengthy quotation is the only way to give full scope of his ideas, though these are little different except verbally from those of the previous writers already presented here.

We have no knowledge of the mode of cultivation employed in the earliest ages of mankind having only the simple announcement in the oldest record extant

⁸John Sherer, *Rural Life described and illustrated*, nd (c1850), p xiv.

⁹John Chalmers Morton, *A Cyclopaedia of Agriculture*, 1855, I, Preface & Introduction.

¹⁰John Donaldson, *British Agriculture*, 1860.

¹¹An Old Norfolk Farmer, *Agriculture . . . ancient and modern*, 1866, I, p 98.

that Abel was a keeper of sheep, and that Cain was a tiller of the ground . . . there is no doubt but that the practice of agriculture was the first and foremost industry of man and we may assume that the knowledge of its principles were imparted to him in one way or another by the same Power that endowed him with understanding and skill.

After the Deluge, of course, Noah became an husbandman and planted a vineyard. This is once again an inevitable example of the fact that historians repeated each other.

All this was stated once more by Judge Hastings Ingham in 1887.¹² He was extremely well read in the Scriptures, and believed that some 6000 years was the world's age. 'Agriculture,' he said, 'was the first occupation of the first human being who trod this earth.' The Cain and Abel legend was the

¹²Judge Hastings Ingham, *Agriculture; its history, importance and prospects*, 1887.

firm basis of his theories, but he acknowledged that the history of farming was nebulous because the tale of history had dwelt upon the broils, and not upon the toils, of the human family. 'The history of agriculture is the history of civilization and progress in the very earliest times. In following the track of the ploughshare we shall have the satisfaction of tracing the rise of human industry from its very origin . . . ' — not very profound, but precise as might be expected from a judge.

After this time the English and Scottish writers who employed their energy in writing the history of farming confined themselves to their native land, and did not venture into the hazy realms of origins other than those of their own country. These and others have been dealt with elsewhere, and are too numerous to be included in a restricted study.

New Guinea Gardens

A Study of Husbandry with Parallels in Prehistoric Europe

Axel Steensberg

1980, xxvi + 224pp., £10.80 (UK only) / \$25.00, 0.12.664940.5

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Early Evidence of Sainfoin Cultivation Around Paris

By PATRICK CHORLEY

UNTIL the end of the eighteenth century sainfoin was much the most widely cultivated of the perennial legumes on the northern French Plain. Indeed it was the only one that was at all generally grown as a field crop.¹ It subsequently played its part in the agricultural revolution that was beginning to get under way, although its relative importance declined with the rapid headway made by lucerne and clover. Although it never achieved the popularity on a European scale of these crops, sainfoin played an important part in the agricultural history of the plain; and much of its own history as a crop plan took place there.²

While it is clear that sainfoin was the most important of the 'artificial meadow' plants on the plain under the old agricultural régime, just how important it was remains obscure; and even more so the early phase of its introduction and establishment in farming practice. Considerable evidence has been brought to light for the seventeenth century by recent research, notably from estate records. But no reference of this or any other type to sainfoin cultivation in the region before 1600 appears to have been found hitherto, if the well-known but dubious testimony of Estienne is excepted.³ The following pages are

mainly concerned with three neglected literary sources: the English reformer Samuel Hartlib's *Legacie* (1651), Henry Lyte's English translation of Dodoens' *Herbal* (1578) and Jean Ruel's *De Natura Stirpium* (1536). The first of these helps to fill out the bare bones of the seventeenth-century archival evidence. The latter two, which appear to have escaped the notice of historians, take the story back certainly to the middle of the sixteenth century and very probably to its beginning.

The neglect of the *Legacie* is surprising as it provides the first circumstantial description of the agronomy of sainfoin cultivation in the Paris area (and what appears to be the earliest reference to lucerne). Indeed it is the most valuable document of this nature before Gilbert's *Traité des Prairies Artificielles* (1787). The neglect is the more remarkable as Sir Robert Weston's *Discourse on Flanders Husbandrie*, which Hartlib published at almost the same time and which does the same thing for clover in Belgium, is such a classic text of agricultural history. Hartlib was extremely interested in foreign agricultural techniques that might usefully be introduced into England, and in local ones that deserved to be

¹This is clear from F-H Gilbert's *Traité des Prairies Artificielles*, Paris, 1787, as well as other contemporary descriptive evidence.

²Ministre de l'Agriculture, *Statistique Agricole de la France, Résultats... 1882*, Nancy, 1887, gives the earliest figures for the distribution of the three crops.

³The first reference to sainfoin found by J Jacquart in his detailed study of the Hurepoix (*La Crise Rurale en Ile-de-France*, Paris, 1974, p 329) comes from a lease of 1631. There is a slightly earlier record of an arrêt enforcing the tithe of sainfoin in the parishes of Rosny Roissy Choisy and Vanvre in the immediate neighbourhood of the capital (*Receuil d'Edits etc Rendus en Faveur des Curez et des*

Chanoines, Paris, 1686, Arrest du Conseil d'Estat, 3 April 1682). Otherwise the only evidence so far uncovered antedating 1600 comes from Normandy in a lease of 1586: (A Plaisse, *La Baronnie de Neubourg*, Paris, 1961, p 566). The claim by R Fossier (*La Terre et les hommes en Picardie*, Paris, 1968, 1, p 429) that clover and sainfoin were grown in the area as early as the fourteenth century among the crops generically termed 'Warisons' is based on a misreading of his source, J M Richard, *Thierry D'Hirecon Agriculteur Artésien*, Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartres, no 53, Paris 1892, p 392. Richard cites a definition of the term 'Warison' by the early eighteenth-century writer Maillart that includes clover and sainfoin, but there is nothing to suggest that it included them at the earlier date. For Estienne see note 23.

better known. The *Legacie* is a compendium of such. He had two informants on potential innovations from France, both well qualified by experience, knowledge and curiosity. Robert Child, who had spent some time in the country in the 1630s and later made a second visit, contributed the main body of the *Legacie* with his 'large letter concerning the defects and remedies of English Husbandry', which is in fact mainly about French farming. Another member of the circle, Arnold Boate, who was resident in Paris from 1648 to 1653, provided a commentary upon the latter and on-the-spot answers to queries that had arisen from it, published by Hartlib in successive editions of the *Legacie*.⁴ All these latter concern the cultivation of sainfoin and lucerne. The artificial grasses were of particular interest to Hartlib. He had specifically asked Child for information upon the subject.

'According to your desires I have sent you what I have observed in France, about the sowing of a seed called commonly Saint Foine', Child begins his letter. 'France although it be supposed to want the fewest things of any province in Europe; yet it hath no small want of hay, especially about Paris: which hath necessitated them to sowe their dry and barren lands with this seed. Their manner of sowing it is done most commonly thus: when they intend to let their corn-lands lie; because they be out of heart, or not situate in place convenient for manuring; then they sow that land with oats and these seeds together. . . .' The ley, which is not usually mown or grazed the first season, lasts seven years, giving one cut. 'Then they usually break it up, and sow it with corn till it be out of heart, and then sow it with sain foin as formerly: for it doth not impoverish the soil as annual plants do, but the roots of this plant being great and sweet . . . do rot, being turned up by the plough and enrich the land.'

Besides its value as a fertilizer, Child noted a further quality of sainfoin. 'When the other grasses and plants are destroyed by the parching heat of the sun . . . this flourisheth very much, having very great root and deep in the ground, and not easily exsiccated.' It is particularly suited to light chalky soils: 'dry and barren land is most proper for it as moist rich land for the great Trefoile (although it will grow indifferently well on all lands)'.

After making certain recommendations on the preparation of the ley for the benefit of English farmers thinking of introducing sainfoin, Child adds almost as an after-thought: 'There is at Paris likewise another sort of fodder which they call *La Lucerne*, which is not inferior but rather preferred before this Saint Foin, for dry and barren grounds: which hath lately been brought thither, and is managed as the former.'⁵ Lucerne was evidently much less familiar to Child than sainfoin. He knew little about it and got its soil requirements wrong. But his bare reference excited interest in England and a desire for more information. It was essentially with providing this that Arnold Boate was concerned in the letters that he sent from Paris in 1651-53. He had little to add about sainfoin except that he had 'seen it grow here about Paris in several places, in rich fat grounds, and those both high and dry and others low and marshy'.

Boate corrected Child as to the right land for lucerne. It needed, so a gentleman upon whose estate it was grown informed him after inquiring of his farmer, a 'rich ground, somewhat loose and light, so as a stiffe clay, and such other tough grounds are no waies for it . . . not over-dry nor over-moist but in a mean'. The description is close but not identical to that of de Serres, with whose *Théâtre* Boate was familiar; and the same is true of other agronomic details about lucerne that he gives, that for example 'naturally it doth not love dung', which if used must be very well rotted and applied early, that it is

⁴For Hartlib's circle see C Webster, *The Great Insaturation*, London, 1975. For Child, in particular, G L Kittredge, 'Dr Robert Child', *Colonial Society of Mass Publications*, XXI. The third (1655) edition of *Samuel Hartlib His Legacie* is the complete one.

⁵Hartlib, *op cit*, pp 1-4.

sown in a cover of oats (de Serres recommending a mixture of oats, barley and vetches).

The agronomy of lucerne is not the same however under northern skies as in de Serres's *Midi*, a difference reflected at several points in what Boate reports. The ley is sown down in April, not March as de Serres says. It normally lasts 10–12 rather than 12–15 years. 'In this climate it useth to be cut but twice a year' — by Gilbert's time it gave three cuts — while 'in hot countries (Provence Languedock and Spaine) it doth five or six times . . .' A further point of difference is more interesting. De Serres recommends that the land destined for lucerne should be prepared as for an ordinary meadow, 'labouré' pars plusieurs et reiterées fois durant seize mois', carefully cleared of stones, and enclosed. It seems clear that the *luzernière* as he envisaged it was set apart from the arable proper, and occupied the kind of privileged 'garden-type' site, to which perennial legume cultivation remained generally confined during the *ancien régime* in Europe (both North and South) until its great extension at the end of the eighteenth century. Boate, on the other hand, reports only three cultivations as necessary for lucerne, one in October followed by two in spring. This suggests that it may already have been integrated into the three-field arable cycle in the neighbourhood of Paris, and that it was sown in oats on the (more carefully prepared) Spring-field in the way that was later to become standard practice on the northern French Plain.⁶

There are similar differences in what de Serres and Child have to say about the agronomy of sainfoin. The former states that it is best grown in closes on carefully prepared soil in which case it should give three cuts. He notes (somewhat surprisingly) that the ley

lasts only four years after which the land will bear fine crops of grain for the same period; and he recommends the farmer to pursue this kind of convertible rotation. He and Child are in agreement on the soil suited to sainfoin and on its beneficial effect upon following crops. 'Vient gaiment en terre maigre', he writes: 'et y laisse certaine vertue engraisante à l'utilité des blès qui en suite y sont semés. . .'⁷

Boate did not confine his services to providing information. He also sent samples of both sainfoin and lucerne seed across the Channel for English amateurs with Hartlib apparently acting as intermediary. Lucerne seed from the *Midi* was commercially available in Paris if somewhat irregularly. (It had been quoted since 1634 on the Carpentras market.⁸) In a letter of 22 March 1653, Boate remarks that as many as three different varieties could be obtained from 'a merchant who dealeth much in oranges and lemons and other Provence wares'. But in later letters he complains of the difficulty of finding seed. 'The new lucerne seeds from Provence and 'Dauphiné are not yet arrived', he writes in one, and in another: 'some weeks since to my knowledge there was but one shop in town that had any, which was the cause that the price was doubled' (from 8 to 16 sous). It is significant however that from what Boate says local farmers were already producing their own seed.

What the Swiss eighteenth-century agricultural writer L'Harpe called 'A

⁶Boate's letters from which these citations are drawn are in Hartlib, *op cit*, pp 109–18 and 200–05. O de Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*, ed Paris, 1804, pp 514–18. According to eighteenth-century descriptions the usual practice was to plough the Spring field only once.

⁷De Serres, *op cit*, pp 518–19. In this context the description of sainfoin cultivation by the Lyon botanist Jacques d'Aléchamps deserves citation as it is the earliest account of the agronomy of the crop. In his *Historia Generalis Plantarum*, first published in 1587 but apparently written some twenty years before he has this to say about 'sparse' (*esparcette*) as he calls it, as grown by farmers around Die (Dauphiné), which de Serres too notes as specializing in the crop. It is sown 'là où il n'y a pas d'abondance de près, ès lieux aspres et pierreux'. It gives three cuts; and grows so abundantly that 'combien que le terroir soit extrêmement maigre néanmoins on droit que c'est un bon pré . . . elle aime principalement les lieux secs et sablonneux'. The citation is from the French translation on 1615, I, pp 411–13.

⁸E Le Roy Ladurie, *Les Paysans de Languedoc*, Paris, 1966, pp 68–9.

confusion not easily to be got over . . . in the names given to the several sorts of artificial grasses' was a source of some perplexity to Boate (as it was later in the century of London), in his purchases of seed, and no doubt the conflicting information he had sometimes to sort out.⁹ This is not the place to discuss the contorted history of these names, everyone of which was ambiguous. But a brief word on the problem is in place as it impinges upon the interpretation of our sixteenth-century texts, and what Boate has to say about it provides at least some clarification. The most striking ambiguity was that alluded to by Gilbert when he wrote apropos of lucerne: 'in almost all the books that discuss it, it is found under the name of sainfoin'.¹⁰ He was doubtless thinking in particular of de Serres, who uses the two words interchangeably. At different times and places the term sainfoin was in fact applied to both *O. sat. lam.* and *M. sat. L.* (and possibly to *Tr. prat.*) as was the term *foin de Bourgogne*. The confusion was compounded by, indeed in part perhaps originated from, the earlier botanists (and agricultural writers) whose efforts were directed less towards classifying these plants and establishing a precise nomenclature for them than to answering the question which of them (and so which names) should be identified with the classical *medica*. 'The name of St. Foine is in some parts of France communicated to lucerne', Boate writes, 'although the generality thereof have appropriated the same to another kind of fodder, extremely differing in all manner of ways, viz the *Onobrychis antiquorum*, wherewith *Medica* (that is the true latin name of lucerne) hath nothing in common.'¹¹

Boate's unequivocal statement, which clearly refers to the usage around Paris, is important in that it enables us to be reasonably certain that when sainfoin is mentioned in leases and other records it does in fact refer to *O. sat.*

Hartlib's *Legacie* has been quoted at length because it helps to complete and also to confirm the extremely fragmentary picture of perennial legume cultivation around Paris during the seventeenth century that emerges from recent research based upon the 'direct' evidence of farm records and the like.¹² The evidence of the *Legacie* suggests that whereas lucerne was still a comparative novelty at the mid-century, sainfoin cultivation was already well-established in farming practice. This squares with Jacquart's findings for the Hurepoix, the district immediately to the south of Paris, which led him to give sainfoin a certain relief as a feature of the agricultural scene, even if in terms of the amount of land devoted to the crop it was a modest one. 'Des 1630', he writes, 'le sainfoin n'est plus seulement une curiosité dans un coin de clos, mais il gagne les champs.'¹³ This latter point is an important one. Much of the early evidence of sainfoin points to its being grown in closes, often alternating in rotation with osiers or vines for example. The *Legacie* leaves no doubt however that it also entered as a regularly recurring long ley into the cereal succession on the arable. It did enter into the 'cycle culturel', even if only on a limited scale, a point which Jacquart for reasons which are not clear elsewhere denies.¹⁴

It is noteworthy that all Jacquart's references, the last of which is from 1660, are to sainfoin. It is only in the second half of the

⁹De l'Harpe, 'The Farmer enriched by Artificial Pastures', *Foreign Essays on Agriculture and Arts*, London, 1766, p 310. Robert Morison, the Oxford Professor of Botany, remarked upon the apparently unwitting deception practised by London seedsmen, who sold seed as lucerne which turned out to be sainfoin. *Plantarum Historia Universalis*, II, Oxford, 1680, p 159.

¹⁰F-H Gilbert, *Traité des Prairies Artificielles*, Paris, 1787, p 50.

¹¹Hartlib, op cit, p 250.

¹²See above all J Jacquart, *Crise*, op cit, and for the same district later in the century, M Venard, *Bourgeois et Paysans au Dix-Septième Siècle*, Paris, 1957, pp 83-4. Also P Brunet, *Structures Agraire et Economie Rurale des Plateaux Tertiaires entre Seine et Oise*, Paris, 1960, p 316; and P Goubert, *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1750*, Paris, 1960, p 94.

¹³J Jacquart, op cit, p 329.

¹⁴J Jacquart in G Duby and A Wallon, eds, *Histoire de la France Rurale*, II, Paris, 1975, p 226. The author here goes so far as to evoke a 'vogue' for sainfoin after around 1630.

century that lucerne appears in the scanty records so far uncovered, the earliest known reference so far as I am aware being in a lease of 1656, also from the Hurepoix.¹⁵ The *Legacie*, with its evidence of a commerce in seed from Provence, shows that lucerne cultivation had certainly taken root in the Paris area by the mid-century, but the statement that the crop had 'lately been brought thither' suggests that its introduction probably dated to sometime after 1600. The importance of our other two sources is that they show that sainfoin certainly appeared on the scene very much earlier than this.

'They name it in French Saint Foin . . . They use to sow it in meadows about Paris.' So runs the entry under *Onobrychis* — the importance of the specification may be recalled — in Henry Lyte's English translation (1578) of de l'Escluse's French version (1557) of Dodoens' famous *Cruydtboek* (1554).¹⁶ This is the first unequivocal evidence of sainfoin cultivation in the Paris area, and the northern French Plain generally; and indeed of the use of the word with this specific meaning. It is important enough to deserve some comment, particularly as it seems to have escaped the notice of historians. The reference does not appear either in Dodoens or de l'Escluse. How did it come to be in Lyte? The answer is to be found in Lyte's own working copy of de l'Escluse's version preserved in the British Library, which is inscribed on the title page with the quaint conceit, 'Henry Lyte taught me to speak English', and which contains a great number of manuscript emendations and additions, almost all of which are in French.

These for the most part follow the revisions made by Dodoens for the second (1563) edition of his *Cruydtboek*. But some are original, including the reference to sainfoin: 'on la sème aux Prez à l'entour de Paris'.

¹⁵See Venard and Brunet, loc cit. The 1656 lease is cited by M Bertrandy-Lacabane, *Bretigny-sur-Orge*, Versailles, 1886, p 112.

¹⁶H Lyte, *A New Herball or Historie of Plants*, London, 1578, pp 557–8.

Who was responsible for the new French text, more especially the original material (which makes a number of allusions to Paris), and when was it prepared? Almost certainly the answer is: de l'Escluse towards the end of the one protracted stay he ever made in the city in 1560–63. It bears every sign of being the draft for a new French edition of his translation, that for some reason never appeared. It does not include the further changes made by Dodoens in his *Fruementorum . . . Historia* of 1566, for example the entirely new chapter on *medica*, which was based on information and specimens sent by de l'Escluse from Spain the previous year. Conversely the entry under *Onobrychis* in the *Historia* does not take account of the revision identifying the plant with sainfoin. There is little doubt therefore as to authorship and date, which places this earliest reference to sainfoin cultivation about 1560, and makes it the outcome of first-hand observation.¹⁷ De l'Escluse was a sedulous botanist on the ground; and it is tempting to infer from his silence in respect of lucerne and red clover that these plants were not yet grown in the area.¹⁸

On the margin of the entry de l'Escluse has written: *medica Ruellii*. The Parisian physician

¹⁷For de l'Esclusés life see F W Hunger, *Charles de l'Escluse*, I, 1927. Hunger, p 117, states that both the inscription and the annotations in the British Library copy used by Lyte are in de l'Escluse's hand. But this is borne out neither by the illustrations he prints of de l'Escluse's handwriting nor by examples of it that exist in the British Library. The comparison of texts however, which he does not make, leaves little doubt as to the correctness of his attribution.

¹⁸Clover was however already grown in Picardy at this time, as is shown by the following passage, referring specifically to red clover, from de l'Obel's *Kruydtboek* of 1581: 'in the French Low-Country and between Béthune and Amiens this clover grows luxuriantly . . . it is sown on fat land and nothing is better for fattening cattle'. He implies that both red and white varieties were grown, as he goes on to note that the former is more often used as a 'fodder crop for cattle and horses'. The passage, which has also been overlooked by historians, is important as it is for as far as I am aware the earliest evidence of clover cultivation in northern France. It deserves to be set alongside the much quoted comment of de l'Obel's compatriot Dodoens (*Fruementorum . . . Historia*, Antwerp, 1566, p 186) — 'Seritur et in arvis apud Brabantos' — which is one of the few indications of clover cultivation in the Netherlands in the sixteenth century.

Jean Ruel was one of the earliest pioneers of the botanical Renaissance. His book *De Natura Stirpium* was published in 1536. He himself conceived the plant that he describes under the head *medica*, and which he claims is 'commonplace' (*trivialis*) in France, to be one and the same with the *medica* of Pliny and Dioscorides.¹⁹ This was of course lucerne (*M. sat.*) and not sainfoin (*O. sat.*). But at the time that Ruel was writing the attribution had not yet been established. The botanical data on the basis of which it could be made had not yet been collected. It was only during the 1560s and 1570s, with the work of Dodoens, de l'Escluse, de l'Obel and d'Aléchamps, that the major perennial legumes, clover, lucerne, and sainfoin, were described and classified; and the names given to them, *trifolium pratense*, *medica*, and *onobrychis* that were to become established in the botanical language. At the same time it came to be generally agreed that the *medica veterum*, to the title of which clover had also been a candidate, was a variety of the plant known at the time in Provence as lucerne or laouserdo and in Spain as alfafa. Which particular variety — for several were described, evidently the outcome of a natural cross between *M. sat.* and *M. falc.* — remained a matter of dispute. None of this knowledge was available to Ruel, who was almost the first modern — and the very first in France — to discuss the subject. From his treatment it seems clear that he was aware of only one perennial legume used as a fodder crop, and that as the ancients had only described one such he assumed that his plant was the same as theirs.

Did Ruel in fact have in mind *M. sat.*, as the botanical and agronomic details he cites from the classical authors and his comments upon the subsequent history of *medica* up to his own time would lead one to suppose? Or was not the plant that he described rather *O. sat.*, as de l'Escluse evidently thought, and his genealogy mistaken? The question is important because Ruel's text, which does

not appear to have been noticed by historians, provides the earliest literary reference to the cultivation of perennial legumes in France.

An analysis of Ruel's botanical description provides an answer that if not conclusive is at least highly probable. In parenthesis it may be noted that unlike the later herbals, the *De Natura Stirpium* is not illustrated: had it been so there would be no problem. If some of the characteristics he attributes to the '*Medica* which is sown in our country' are culled verbatim from Pliny and Dioscorides, others are not to be found in these or any other authorities, ancient or modern. They presumably derive from Ruel's own observations; and they are not compatible with *M. sat.* Most critical is the point, which he emphasizes by repetition, that the pod is single-seeded. Further although he quotes Dioscorides's description of the pod as twisted and horn-shaped, he adds that 'the curved outer rim (or opening?) is indented pushing out small points', and he describes it as growing at the 'extreme end of the stem', points which do not apply to lucerne.²⁰

All these characteristics, on the contrary, fit very exactly with sainfoin; and sainfoin moreover is the only cultivated perennial legume that they do fit. Its flowers come much more obviously at the extremity of the stem than those of lucerne. Its pods are single-seeded with 'a semi-circular, usually strongly-toothed dorsal suture'.²¹ There is little doubt therefore that de l'Escluse was correct; and that although Ruel bowed in typical Renaissance fashion to antique authority and created thereby a strange hybrid, the plant that he had direct experience of was *O. sat.* It is very possible that de l'Escluse had confirmation of this from botanical circles in Paris during his sojourn in the city between 1560 and 1563. Moreover Ruel would not have been alone

²⁰The key passage runs in the original: 'In scaporum cacumine breves siliquales prodeunt in corniculorum speciem intortes, denticulato foris inflexu et velut exiguos mucrones exerente, in quibus singulare semen, fere lunatum continetur . . . singulae thecae singulorum seminum sunt capaces . . .'

²¹N T Gill and K C Vear, *Agricultural Botany*, 1969, p 172.

¹⁹J Ruel, *De Natura Stirpium*, Basel, 1537, p 394 ff.

among the earlier generation of Renaissance botanists to have identified *medica* with sainfoin. The entry under the heading in Conrad Gesner's *Catalogus* of 1542 runs: 'a vetch-like plant sown as feed for cattle, growing initially like clover'.²² The comparison with the vetch could hardly apply to any other plant than sainfoin given the similarity of leaf formation, quite distinct from clover or lucerne.

Ruel claimed, as we have seen, that his plant was common. Elsewhere he states that it is grown in 'several parts of France', which appears to be borne out by the fact that he gives three different names for it from the vernacular — *Burgundiense foenum*, *grande treflon* and *foenaccia*. That it was cultivated around Paris is clear, because he cites the last term in distinction from the other two as that used by farmers in his 'sermone patrio'. This could refer to the Soissonnais, where he was born. But it certainly refers to northern France. Estienne, who took over Ruel's description almost verbatim a few years later, glosses the passage: 'de la foigasse, sermone Picardo', which in the linguistic sense appears to mean northern France generally and not just the province.²³ What little is known about Ruel's life suggests in fact that he most

probably derived his information about the crop-plant that he supposed to be *medica* from the vicinity of Paris.²⁴ He was apparently a confirmed stay-at-home, reluctant to follow his employer Francois Premier on the royal progresses; and on the death of his wife he retired to the seclusion of a canonry of Notre Dame, where he wrote the *De Natura Stirpium*.

If our interpretation of the latter is correct, it means that sainfoin was already grown around Paris at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

culminating in the *Praedium Rusticum* (1554), nor Liebaut's French version (*L'Agriculture et Maison Rustique*, 1569), are of any value as evidence here. What they do not transcribe from Ruel, they take from Pliny and Columella. The same is true of their German counterpart Heresbach, who in his description of *medica* or 'Welsche Klee' as he also calls it (*Rei Rusticae*, Cologne, 1570, pp 66–8) also plagiarizes Ruel word for word, adding agronomic information from the classical authorities. The passage has been adduced by W Abel (*Geschichte der deutschen Landwirtschaft*, Stuttgart, 1962, p 154) as evidence that lucerne was already being grown by farmers in the Rhineland, Heresbach's homeland, in the sixteenth century. The inference seems open to question at least. Clearly he had no first hand experience of the plant (whatever it was). When he remarks 'Iam etiam in Germanium transfertur' it seems possible that he had in mind the botanical gardens of herbalists rather than the fields of farmers. The northern herbalists were certainly interested in *medica* at this time. Dodoens and others obtained seeds from the Mediterranean countries, and doubtless sometimes like Turner in England (*Herball*, pt 2, 1562, pp 52–3) experimented with it as a potential crop plant.

²⁴For Ruel's life see C G Gillespie (ed), *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, New York, 1975.

²²C Gesner, *Catalogus*, Zurich, 1542, p 61.

²³C Estienne, *Pratsum Lacus Arundinetum*, Paris, 1543, p 11. It is worth pointing out that neither Estienne's latin works

The Mechanization of the Harvest in South-West Lancashire, 1850–1914

By ALISTAIR MUTCH

THIS study of mechanization in south-west Lancashire arose out of a desire to understand the development of rural society in that area, rather than as an examination of mechanization itself. However, it is felt that it is important in its own right for a number of reasons. Detailed accounts in particular areas, focussing on the reactions of farmers to new machinery as opposed to discussions of the technical problems of innovation, are rare. Those that do exist tend to concentrate on the early years of the nineteenth century, whereas this survey extends up to the First World War.¹ These accounts are also particularly concerned with the application of machinery to the planting, harvesting and threshing of grain crops, but in south-west Lancashire the potato crop was of great importance. In contrast to the corn growing areas of the south and east, south-west Lancashire was a high-wage, high-productivity district with a strong reliance on Irish labour at times of peak labour demand. It was also an area of small farmers, and all these factors would be expected to have an impact on the pattern of mechanization.

South-west Lancashire is a flat plain between Mersey and Ribble, centred on Ormskirk. It was largely reclaimed from peat moss during the nineteenth century, and its fertile soil and long growing season offered extremely favourable conditions for farmers.²

It was above all an area of intensive arable cultivation devoted to the production of cash crops for readily accessible urban markets. The figures in Table 1 show a steady decline in the area under permanent grass, as the area under rotation was expanded to cope with the heavy demand for vegetables and hay to feed the growing human and animal populations of Liverpool and the south Lancashire towns. Potatoes occupied about 20 per cent of the total area, and over 60 per cent of the total area under grass was cut for hay. Wheat shows a decline from 12.82 per cent of the total area to 8.14 per cent in 1890, being replaced by oats, whose straw found a ready market in the stables and dairies of Liverpool.

TABLE 1
Percentage of total area under cultivation

	Grain crops	Green crops	Rotated grass	Permanent grass
1849		47.46		47.95
1870	33.28	22.77	20.87	21.89
1890	32.69	19.73	25.22	21.67
1910	36.00	24.31	19.11	18.26

Sources 1849: S Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of England*, London, 1849. Details given for nine south-west parishes. 1870, 1890, 1910: PRO MAF 68 parish agricultural returns for Sefton and West Lancashire.

The competition of nearby towns meant that agricultural wages were high. In 1859, 'a man of the agricultural class . . . considered himself well paid and a big wage if he got ten or twelve shillings for his week's wage'.³

¹J R Walton, 'A Study in the Diffusion of Agricultural Machinery in the Nineteenth Century', *University of Oxford School of Geography Research Paper*, 5, 1973; S Macdonald, 'The Progress of the early Threshing Machine', *Agric Hist Rev*, XXIII, 1975, pp 63–77.

²For the 'improvement' of south-west Lancashire in the early nineteenth century see T W Fletcher, 'The Agrarian Revolution in Arable Lancashire', *Trans Lanca and Ches Antiq Soc*, 72, 1962, pp 93–122.

³Thomas Barnes, *Changes from 1860 to 1910 along the banks of the River Mersey*, p 97, typescript at Crosby Hall, Little Crosby.

Wages increased steeply from this level and by 1870 stood at at least 16s for labourers. Lancashire farmers were at this time much agitated by the 'Labour Question', but the agent to the county's largest landowner, Lord Derby, felt there was little they could do about it. He could not see

how the labour question is to be met except by paying a market price for it — or when practicable doing without it. The wages around this place have risen considerably & are paid Farmers giving 16/- or 18/- to Labourers and £1 to Teamsmen.⁴

The evidence from this date onwards indicates a much slower rise towards a general level of 20s for labourers by 1913. In 1891, for example, teamsmen on Mount Pleasant Farm, Speke, were getting 20s a week, labourers 18s. Wilson Fox reported an average rate during the 1890s of 18–20s a week in west Lancashire and 16–18s a week in Sefton. By 1903 wages in Sefton had come up to those in west Lancashire at 18–20s, where they remained until raised by the strike of 1913.⁵

While farm servants are generally associated with pastoral districts they were still of importance in south-west Lancashire in 1851. In one parish, Aughton, they outnumbered 'outside' labourers by 115 to 103.⁶ It will be argued that these were the first to suffer from the introduction of machinery. Casual labour was also of great importance in the area. In 1850 William Rothwell observed that were it not for the Irish, the farmers could not get their work done in the busy seasons, as the manufacturing population cannot leave their employment on account of the machinery, which would have to stop. Forty years ago they could leave their looms, spinning jennies, etc, at any season for a few weeks.

It is difficult to establish piece rates as these would often be a matter for negotiation between farmer and labourer, but the evidence available suggests that the rate for

digging potatoes was in 1871 1d per score yards. This was up to 1½d in 1878, but had fallen back to 1d in 1879 because of the bad harvest. In 1903 it was back at 1½d. The rate for casual workers on the corn harvest at Mount Pleasant Farm in 1891 appears to have been 3s 6d a day.⁷

The primary method adopted to assess rates of adoption of machinery was the use of farm sale notices, as pioneered by J R Walton.⁸ The principal farming paper for south-west Lancashire from the 1850s onwards was the *Ormskirk Advertiser*, which included in its title the claim to be the *Agricultural Intelligencer for West Lancashire*. As this study was intended to supplement wider research there was a limit on time available and a sample was taken comprising the following five-year periods: 1857–61, 1867–71, 1877–81, and 1887–91. A check was also made on the situation in 1913. The number of notices appearing was about 35 a year in the earliest period, rising to between 40 and 50 later. Reasons given for sales fall into four categories with the death or retirement of the farmer being the major ones, the other two being leaving the farm, and distraint for rent or some equivalent forced sale. A check was made of the size range of farms represented in notices from the parish of Aughton against data derived from the 1871 census returns. It was found that larger farms were over-represented, farms over 100 acres being only 5.8 per cent of the total number of farms in 1871, but 13.2 per cent of those represented in sale notices. This may well have the effect of exaggerating the trend towards mechanization.

With the buoyant demand for hay and the high price of labour, grass mowers might be expected to enjoy rapid adoption. Other conditions had to be fulfilled, however, before

⁴Liverpool RO, Derby papers 920DER (15), Hale correspondence, 26 April 1872.

⁵Liverpool, RO, Speke papers 920SPE 7/1, Wages book, Mount Pleasant Farm, 1891; Board of Trade, *Report on Wages, Earnings and Conditions of Employment of Agricultural Labourers in the UK, 1900*, Cd 346, p 113, 1905, Cd 2376, p 146.

⁶PRO Census, 1851. HO/107.

⁷William Rothwell, *Report of the Agriculture of the County of Lancaster*, Warrington, 1850, Appendix, p 51; Lancs RO, Hesketh Papers, DDHe 62/33, Accounts of Park Farm Rufford, 1871; *Ormskirk Advertiser*, 2 Oct 1879; *Report on Wages, etc*, 1905, p 146; Speke papers 7/1.

⁸Walton, *op cit*.

they could be used. Fields were 'laid out more in five and six drill butts, the reason for laying them like that, as if it was a wet season it would help drain the land'. Before the mower could be successfully used, adequate under drainage, making possible the flatter cultivation of fields was essential. The first appearance of a mower in the district was noted in 1860 when John Bullen of Ince Blundell cut 60 acres of clover and old meadow grass with a machine made by Burgess and Key.⁹ The first machine to appear in the sale notices also came in this year, at the sale of Messrs Thomas Barton and Son of Thornton Farm and Dovecote Farm, Walton. This was the only machine to appear in the year, as was that of James Musker of Walton the following year. By 1867 there were five mowers, representing 14.2 per cent of all sales.¹⁰ Again sellers were concentrated

Over the period 1867-71 combined machines figure in 15.5 per cent of all sales, mowers in only 6.6 per cent. This dominance is maintained in later periods. In 1877-81, for example, combined machines appear in 59.5 per cent of notices, mowers in a mere 8.2 per cent. This was despite the technical difficulties involved in cutting the two crops:

the crop corn was stiffer to cut than hay and could not be left lying loose on the ground . . . wide angled triangular knives with saw edges were found least liable to choke in grain crops, compared with the smooth-edged, sharp-pointed knives that worked best on grass.

These points have led one writer to claim with regard to reaping machines that 'It became necessary to divide the machines into three classes; side delivery, those without side delivery, and combined reaper-grass mowers. The last combination was never perfected and mowing machines became a separate item.'¹¹ It seems that in south-west Lancashire farmers' ideas of what constituted 'perfection' diverged considerably from those of engineers. As noted above the area was one of small farmers. In 1870 80.62 per cent of farms were under 50 acres, with a further 14.02 per cent under 100 acres. Such farms would, except for the smallest, grow roughly similar small acreages of hay and grain crops. For example, John Pilkington of Burscough in 1868 grew on his 57 acres 13 acres of wheat, 11 acres of oats and 13 acres of clover.¹² Such acreages would justify mechanization, but not the acquisition of two separate machines. It seems that farmers were willing to sacrifice a certain amount of technical efficiency in return for economy.

As some farmers had both mower and combined machines it makes more sense to look at the proportion of farms having some mechanical means of getting in the hay harvest rather than at particular machines. This proportion was climbing over the first

TABLE 2
Percentage of notices in which machines appear

	Mower	Reaper	Combined machine	Self binder
1857-61	1.2	—	—	—
1867-71	7.7	2.2	16.2	—
1877-81	8.2	3.8	59.5	—
1887-91	17.6	2.7	71.8	—
1913	45.1	0.3	32.2	45.1

	Haymaker	Horse hay rake	Potato digger
1857-61	—	—	—
1867-71	15.0	13.5	—
1877-81	15.7	40.3	1.6
1887-91	15.2	56.1	3.6
1913	0.9	74.1	22.2

in areas around Liverpool, the next three adopters being in Aintree, Toxteth Park and Kirkby.

An important point has to be made here, and that is the dominance after this year of the combined reaping and mowing machine.

⁹Barnes, *op cit*, p 103; *Orms Adv*, 13 Sept 1860.

¹⁰See Table 2.

¹¹C S Orwin and E H Whetham, *History of British Agriculture 1846-1914*, Newton Abbot, 1971, p 111; M Partridge, *Farm Tools Through the Ages*, Reading, 1973, p 130.

¹²Figures on farm size from PRO MAF 68 Agricultural returns, 1870; *Jour Manchester and Liverpool Agric Soc*, 1868, p 49.

period, from 17.1 per cent in 1867 to 42.2 per cent in 1871, the average over the five years being 26.5 per cent. The figure had reached majority adoption by 1877 at 64.4 per cent, climbing to a full three-quarters of notices examined by 1881. The period between initial and majority adoption was thus about 15 years.

Binns noted in 1851 that 'A few machines for spreading mown grass have been observed', and rates of adoption of hay making machinery ('rowers' and 'tedders') and of horse hay rakes over the period 1857-61 were 15 per cent and 13.5 per cent respectively. Mechanical means of making hay did not prove popular with farmers, however, and the appearance of such machines in sale notices remained constant at around 15 per cent throughout our period. Hay making was one of the few aspects of Lancashire's agriculture to be singled out for praise by agricultural writers. Binns, for example, remarked that 'Its excellence consists in making the grass into hay in the least possible time.' Presumably farmers felt that such machinery would effect little improvement, and indeed might damage the hay. By contrast, collection of the crop could be speeded up significantly by the use of the hay rake, and by 1877 it figured in 48.8 per cent of sale notices. Its use reached the majority of farmers in the period 1887-91, when it averaged 56.1 per cent. Walton found a similar resistance to haymaking machinery in Oxfordshire, with adoption rates of between 10 and 20 per cent. Majority adoption of hay rakes seems to have come somewhat sooner, about 1880, but the tempo of adoption appears to have been broadly similar.¹³

With the emphasis on combined reaping and mowing machines noted above one would not expect to find a high proportion of reaping machines, and this is borne out by analysis of the notices. Before mechanization 'grain [was] mostly cut with the sickle or reaping hook, and sometimes with the scythe;

the latter mode is gaining ground'. The continuing use of the sickle was largely due to Irish harvesters who brought their sickles with them. Even at this time a desire to be more independent of casual labour was a reason given for the importance of reaping machines. 'It is hardly possible', asserted an inspector for the Manchester and Liverpool Agricultural Society, 'to over estimate their importance when we bear in mind the now greatly diminished amount of extra assistance obtainable from Irish labourers and others at times of harvest'.¹⁴

The first recorded use of a reaping machine to be found was in 1853 when a one-horse machine manufactured by Harker of Northwich and costing £10 was bought for use on the home farm of the Earl of Sefton at Croxteth Park. Unfortunately, the agent had to report that 'The machine, to my great disappointment, so far has not acted well', and this was also the experience of the Manchester and Liverpool Agricultural Society when they held a trial of reapers at Warrington in the following year. The land was soft and uneven, and the crop full of grass and weeds, but also the four machines were technically poor. It had to be reported that 'it was manifest to all present that further and considerable improvements are required in the Mechanism of these Reapers before they can be substituted for the old fashioned kind — the sickle'. After a further three trials the Society felt able to declare that 'The using of these machines is now becoming general in this part of the country'.¹⁵ An examination of the sale notices indicates that this claim was wide of the mark.

No reapers appear in the notices for the period 1857-61, and in the second period they appear only in 1867 and 1871 when they were in 5.7 and 4.4 per cent of notices respectively. The characteristics of some of

¹³J Binns, *Notes on the Agriculture of Lancashire*, Preston, 1851, pp 45, 88; Walton, *op cit*, pp 8-9.

¹⁴Binns, *op cit*, p 45; *Jour Manchester and Liverpool Agric Soc*, 1857, p 22.

¹⁵Lancs RO, Molyneux Papers, DDM 6/250, 17 Aug 1853, 6/251, 27 Aug 1853; *Jour Manchester and Liverpool Agric Soc*, 1854, p 20, 1857, p 22.

the early adopters can be looked at more closely. Peter Almond of Lunt farmed 121 acres and in addition to his Forshaws reaper used a Burgess and Key mower, two-horse hay rakes and a 'raker and rower'. Richard Rimmer had accumulated sufficient money to be retiring at the age of 59 in 1871. He had come to his farm twenty years earlier, when he had a capital of £3000 and was 'universally spoken of as a painstaking industrious Man — though a man devoid of much education'. On his 300-acre Gore House Farm in Altcar he used two reapers, one made by Nicholson, two mowers, a hay tedder and a hay rake. John Fairhurst, besides farming 152 acres at Woolands near Ormskirk, was also the owner of the Ormskirk Steam Corn Mill. His other business interests included the drying of chicory, of which he grew 52 acres, and an agricultural machinery agency selling steam engines and threshing machines direct from the manufacturers. While his farm was mainly arable, he was also a breeder of pedigree cattle, one of which, a bull named Inkerman, was exported to Venezuela in 1857. He had two 'Eclipse' reapers by Samuelson, a mower, horse hay rake, hay-maker, 10-row corn drill and a subsoil plough, but obviously over-reached himself, as his sale in 1871 was due to his bankruptcy.¹⁶

The adoption of reaping machines remained confined to such farmers in later years. In 1877–81 the average proportion of sales in which they appeared was only 3.8 per cent, in 1887–91 2.7 per cent. Taking figures for reapers and combined machines together, it appears that 19.3 per cent of farmers had some mechanical means of harvesting grain in the years 1867–71, a proportion which had increased to 61.1 per cent by 1877–81.

The adoption of harvesting machinery must have been in part a response to the considerable increase in agricultural wages in the years

since 1860. It had the effect of considerably reducing the workforce. In 1851, for example, Robert Neilson employed 35 men on his 300-acre Halewood Farm. By 1871 the figure was down to 19. It is noticeable that, whereas there were six farm servants living in the house in 1851, there were none in 1871. The use of the opportunity afforded by machinery to dispose of farm servants is confirmed by the position in Aughton. There were now only 64 farm servants, while the number of labourers had risen to 144. A similar situation was noted in the neighbouring parish of Lydiate where a decline in population was attributed to 'the general introduction of machinery for farm purposes . . . comparatively few young men are now kept on farms; those that are engaged are chiefly "datal-workmen" (day labourers)'. The new machinery had caused some decrease in the number of men employed full time, but still required many casual labourers. There were 10 people binding oats behind a reaper in Maghull in 1869. The next phase of mechanization was drastically to alter this situation.¹⁷

There are no figures for the number of Irish migrant labourers who worked in Lancashire. The figures available at national level indicate a decline from 38,000 in 1880 to 23,000 by 1890, rising again to 32,000 in 1900 but dropping back to 18,500 by 1910. In 1897 the *Ormskirk Advertiser* complained that 'The comparative dearth of labour is very freely commented on throughout the district. Irish harvesters, in particular, were hardly ever known to be so scarce'. There is evidence that those who continued to come across were aware of their stronger bargaining position. There are reports of strikes by Irish labourers in Speke in 1891 and in Cheshire in 1900.¹⁸ It is very possible that there were others; by

¹⁶ *Orms Adv.*, 2 Nov 1871, PRO Census 1861 RG/9/2726; *Orms Adv.*, 19 Jan 1871, Molyneux Papers DDM 6/216, 13 Aug 1851, Census 1861 RG/9/2759; *Orms Adv.*, 6 Apr 1871, 24 Sept 1857, *Jour Manchester and Liverpool Agric Soc.*, 1867, pp 43–4; Lancs RO, DX/1960, Handbill.

¹⁷ Census 1851 HO/107/2193, 1871 RG/10/3854; 1871 RG/10; T E Gibson, *Lydiate Hall*, Edinburgh, 1876, p 301; *Orms Adv.*, 19 Aug 1869.

¹⁸ J Handley, *The Irish in Modern Scotland*, Cork, 1947, p 171; *Orms Adv.*, 22 July 1897; Speke papers, 10/6, 8 Oct 1891; *Manchester Evening News*, 20 and 25 July 1900.

their nature they were shortlived and unlikely to be reported. At Speke, wages paid to casual labourers in 1891 amounted to £85 16s 1d (£53 3s 4d for the harvest, £30 12s 9d for potatoes dug by piece work) or 15 per cent of the total wages bill. Considerable savings were offered by the self binder which 'enables the farmer to get through his work with less work than heretofore, and with comparative independence'. In addition to these incentives to adopt the self binder and potato digger, Lancashire farmers were feeling threatened by agricultural depression. In the early 1890s the price of one of their staple products, hay, was reduced by an influx of imports from America. They had also seen the effects of depression in the rest of England. Their papers contained letters from Lancashire farmers who had seized the chance of cheap rents to move to Essex. All these factors encouraged the adoption of machinery in the 20 years following 1890.¹⁹

The self binder had of course been available much earlier. The first major trial of self binding machines in England took place at Aigburth near Liverpool in 1877 in connection with the show of the Royal Agricultural Society. The first farmer to have been found to adopt the machine in south-west Lancashire was Robert Neilson of Halewood. In 1882 he cut all his oats with a Woods self binder using wire: 'Mr Neilson does not object to that, only he uses a superior kind of wire, furnished by Rylands of Warrington.' Neilson was possibly the best known farmer in Lancashire, having used steam for ploughing since 1867 and making his own gas to power a threshing mill and bone mill. He was a JP and was on the committee of the Liverpool Farmers Club. The first exhibition of a self binder at the Ormskirk show was in 1884, when a machine newly purchased by Edward Threlfall of Halsall was displayed. In 1888 Henry Whitehead, who farmed 400 acres at Hesketh

Bank, had a machine.²⁰ These are all isolated examples, as is the first machine to turn up in the sale notices. This was in 1890 when the executors of Robert Swift of the 138-acre Clock House Farm, Bickerstaffe, advertised a Woods machine for sale. In the same year the *Ormskirk Advertiser* noted that 'Within the past few days we have witnessed the operations of several self-binding harvesters in Aughton, Scarisbrick, and Halsall, and, on the whole, they did their work remarkably well.' By 1913 they considered that the self binder had been widely adopted; 'wherever one may travel now in the Ormskirk district it is very rare indeed for a mower and reaper to be seen at work'.²¹ A check of sale notices for that year reveals self binders being offered for sale in 45.1 per cent of the sales, which, while indicating widespread adoption, does not prove the demise of the combined machine.

Prior to the 1890s there was a lack of interest in the possible application of machinery to the harvesting of potatoes. At the show of the Manchester and Liverpool Agricultural Society in 1857 Col Wilson-Patten drew his audience's attention to the need for potato diggers. A machine exhibited at the show gave him some hope. Yet when the first machine turned up in the sale notices 21 years later it is an isolated example. Technical reasons were partly to blame. In 1877 the Ormskirk and Southport Agricultural Society organized a trial of potato diggers which proved unsatisfactory. Those picking behind the machines held up the potatoes in derision and asked 'if such work was ever done with the fork?' The conclusion was that 'The result of the trial will scarcely warrant blacksmiths in giving up making potato forks yet'.²²

Interest seems to have been too low to stimulate innovation within the area itself, the closest successful manufacturer being J S Warburton of Preston. There were no

¹⁹Speke papers 7/1; *Orms Adv.*, 21 Aug 1890; RC Agricultural Depression, *Minutes of Evidence*, 1894, c8541, Q27261.

²⁰'Mechanics on the Farm', *Field*, 1882, p 545, *Orms Adv.*, 16 Aug 1894; *Orms Adv.*, 31 July 1880, 18 Feb 1909.

²¹*Orms Adv.*, 21 Aug 1890, 28 Aug 1913.

²²*Orms Adv.*, 17 Sept 1857, 30 Aug 1877.

diggers from Lancashire exhibited at the 1877 Liverpool Royal Show. Similarly, at a major trial of diggers at the 1881 Newcastle Royal Show machines were entered from Scotland, Wales, Lincoln, and Berwick-on-Tweed, but none from Lancashire. There were no local manufacturers to compare with Wilson of Tarleton who made combined machines. There was some change in the 1890s when a Bickerstaffe farmer, Robert Rosebotham, had a digger of his invention taken up by Powell Brothers and Whittaker of Wrexham. At the same time Haslam and Mawdesley of Walton had started making diggers. In 1895 1000 farmers are reported to have attended a trial of diggers.²³

The first adopters to show up on the sale notices were in 1878, at Moor Hall Farm, Aughton (132 acres) and Reed's Farm, Rainford (100 acres). Over the period 1877-81 diggers appear in only 1.6 per cent of all notices, and in the period 1887-91 in 3.6 per cent. One reason for this low level of adoption was the fact that much of the potato crop was grown by small farmers. Besides having little capital, relatively small acreages under potatoes and adequate supplies of family labour, they often tended to concentrate on early potatoes. With this crop harvesting was a question of raising small amounts as soon as possible and without damage. In addition, the usual practice was to plant savoys or cabbages in between the rows of early potatoes thus rendering the use of a potato digger out of the question.

The greater interest in the 1890s might have been encouraged by the switch by some larger farmers to a bigger acreage of main crop potatoes, as early potatoes were under competition from imports. However, a correspondent in the *Ormskirk Advertiser* pointed out that

If potatoes happened to be very high, and one wanted to get the high prices, well, then, the potato getter might have something to say for itself, but I will back a

potato to fetch more in March than in September, so there is nothing to be got by speed.²⁴

The main reason for the new interest in potato diggers was the scarcity of casual labour and a desire to reduce costs. In 1891 the agent to the Speke estate reported that

The Irish labour is this year giving us a deal of trouble, there appears to be no means of satisfying them, I have had 9 men struck work today at Mount Pleasant farm, this is the seed time this year, fortunately I have the Potato Digger otherwise I should be in quite a fix.

Once a digger was used, considerable savings on labour could be made, as the type of labour required was qualitatively different, and could be done by either women or school children. The Speke agent observed that 'on account of the wet weather I have been unable to use the Potato Digger & the men have been digging by the piece, but I now have a large staff of women as well as men, picking up after the digger'. He considered the saving to be made by using the digger to be £20. One further change was required to make full use of such machinery: the shifting of school holidays to coincide with the peak period of harvesting in October, which was achieved in Aughton by 1898. Potato diggers were then adopted by a considerable number of larger farmers, appearing in 22.2 per cent of sale notices in 1913, when it was reported that 'this system seems to be greatly on the increase in the Ormskirk district'.²⁵

It has been argued that the main reason for the adoption of machinery was high wages and an uncertain supply of casual labour. An additional reason for the change in the last decade of the nineteenth century may have been a drop in the number of farms under 50 acres, which amounted to 62.59 per cent of the total number of farms in 1910. The savings which could be made by large farmers are indicated by the drop in the annual wage bill on Speke Home Farm from £671 in 1892

²⁴*Orms Adv*, 21 Sept 1893.

²⁵Speke papers 10/6, 8 Oct 1891, 2 Nov 1891, 14 Nov 1892; Lancs RO, SMAu 1/3 Aughton school log, 29 Sept 1898; *Orms Adv*, 16 Oct 1913.

²³*JRASE*, 1881, p 222; *Orms Adv*, 24 Jan, 16 May, 26 Sept, 1895.

to £523 in 1898.²⁶ The first wave of mechanization coincided with a steep rise in wage rates. Its result was a drop in the number of full-time men employed, and particularly in the numbers of farm servants. The next target for economies, under the stimulus of a fear of economic depression, was Irish labour. The self binder and the potato digger lessened the reliance on casual labour and threw a greater burden of work on the permanent workers. This was to be of importance in the unionization of the area's workers and the strike of 1913.

There were other factors which affected the detail of the adoption of machinery. The clearest case of this was the combined machine. The particular conditions of south-west Lancashire, small farmers producing crops for immediate sale, meant the widespread adoption of a machine which, if not technically efficient compared to separate mowers and reapers, could cut economically their small acreages of grain and hay. It would

be interesting to see if the combined machine enjoyed similar success in other areas.

The need for further studies of the experience in clearly defined regions is also illustrated by the adoption of the potato digger. The knowledge that potato spinners were patented in 1855 means little when it is discovered that, in one important potato growing area, serious adoption by farmers does not begin until the late 1890s. This study also confirms the view expressed by Walton that, if the years from 1880 to the First World War were not ones of significant innovation, they were ones which saw important growth in the use of machinery.²⁷ The changes which were made then had important effects for rural society. They helped to prepare the ground for Lancashire's 'Revolt of the Fields'.

²⁶PRO MAF 68; Speke papers 4/1 Home Farm Accounts.

²⁷Walton, *op cit*, p 9. See also David Morgan, 'The Place of Harvesters in Nineteenth-century Village Life', in R Samuel (ed), *Village Life and Labour*, 1975. Morgan's claim that 'mechanical aids to harvesting were slow to be accepted in English agricultural practice' (p 61), seems to be contradicted by the experience of south-west Lancashire.

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Book Reviews

M I FINLEY (ed), *Studies in Roman Property by the Cambridge University Seminar in Ancient History*. CUP, 1976. 211 pp.

Cambridge University Press are to be felicitated for having decided to publish this work (and others) in multilite. Let us hope that their example finds imitators.

The essays here reproduced are the work of a seminar of advanced students, of a competent order. Professor Finley, explaining the aims of the exercise, frames the questions that invite answers in the field selected. He emphasizes the paucity of the literary evidence, the shortcomings of conclusions often based on highly random references, the absence of figures and the impact of state action on private investment in land.

R P Duncan-Jones opens with a study of configurations of landholding in the Roman Empire. Having listed the categories of land-proprietorship, he proceeds to discuss the private estates, pointing out that such estates tended to become fragmented owing to inheritance; hence any known unit might have been part of an estate elsewhere. He then examines six areas for which estate registers exist; his method is statistical, his information variously derived from tax assessments, recorded acreages, income, and water-entitlement. But he asks: do differentiations arise from a variation of environments, is the raw material too selective, ignoring the small-holder, and are the largest landlords under-represented? He concludes that comparisons are possible only within the same sector of wealth, but also that the records point unequivocally to a heavy aggregation of property in the hands of the rich. One feels that these studies could be much more realistic were it only possible to identify and study the areas on the ground.

Dorothy Crawford tackles the problems of the imperial estates, interesting herself in definition, movement in and out of imperial control, management both internally and in relation to the whole imperial economy, and the personal involvement of the emperors. Her list of known certain imperial estates is extremely cautious, and could certainly be expanded. She doubts, for instance, if the Combe Down inscription refers to an estate, but has overlooked that more than one procurator is here alluded to, so that several imperial projects may be meant. The *centurio regionarius* recorded at Bath restoring a shrine *insolentia dirutum* surely indicates a *regio*, ie the subdivision of an imperial estate, in the vicinity. The extent of imperial estates in Judaea was certainly larger than this study would imply, and a good deal of additional information is now available there. Crawford dwells on the policy of the emperors to absorb the management of the *ager publicus* into that of their own estates. Important is the

mention that the system of procurators, conductors and coloni recorded in the African inscriptions was not necessarily repeated in other provinces. Apart from Asia Minor, it certainly existed in the Lydda district of Judaea, where the *aris*, the precise Hebrew equivalent of *mishotes* is mentioned in the Talmud. Tiberius, Nero and Severus acquired much landed property by confiscation, so that the imperial domain became a major factor in the Empire's economy, thus withdrawing markets from the private sector. Various forms of lease and management are here detailed, but Crawford does not discuss the fact that some imperial estates (eg in Noricum) appear to have imposed customs at their borders. The emperors were of course interested in the revenue that their domains yielded, and Hadrian encouraged his coloni to cultivate marginal lands on favourable terms. John Crook deals with classical Roman law and the sale of property. As a mere layman I have only one comment here. A constitution of Gordian deals with forced sales at low prices, and Talmudic rulings appear to be very interested in this subject in Judaea in the same century — a striking example of the impact of common conditions on two very different systems of law.

Elizabeth Rawson on the Ciceronian aristocracy and its properties is more relevant to social than to economic problems, if they can be distinguished. She notes that there is little sentimental attachment to individual estates, and landed property did not contribute to political power; the absence of primogeniture and entail resulted in much breaking up of estates by gift and bequest. Few owners, apparently, were genuinely interested in agriculture itself, yet on the business side many large villas supplied luxury foods to the city of Rome, and while aristocrats seem to have been keen buyers and sellers of land, knowledge of professional property — dealers and developers is restricted — one was Orata, who may have invented the shower bath.

Professor Finley now takes a hand in private farm tenancy in Italy. The sources are meagre; fixed money rents, share cropping and permanent payment in kind were all current. The situation appears to have been that good tenants were hard to find, and landlords were prepared to retain their lessees despite arrears and insolvency, and to deal leniently with them for that reason. Why not? Pliny netted 400,000 sesterces per annum from his tenants at Tifernum Tiberinum. Indeed, the offence of forcible retention of tenants is referred to more than once in the imperial edicts.

P Garnsey examines urban property investments; Atticus and Cicero, and certainly others, owned income-bringing shops and blocks of houses in town (Cicero received 80,000 sesterces per year from his).

Many well-to-do city-houses at Volubilis (Africa) in the third century A.D. were centres of oil-production; at Timgad one of the most luxurious dwellings possessed shops communicating with its interior. In Noricum Alföldi noted the link between the wealthy city bourgeoisie and various crafts. This subject deserves study in view of the various statements of scholars concerning the non-productive character of classical cities, and of the concentration of trade and industry in the hands of non-citizens, a doctrine propounded by Professor Finley himself in his book, *The Ancient Economy*.

C R Whittaker winds up with the theme of *agri deserti*. His is an exercise in which he criticizes damagingly almost every testimony usually cited to prove the spread of uncultivated tracts and the general decline of agriculture of the Empire from the third century onwards. He rightly admits that this sort of evidence cannot be quantified.

Whittaker, it seems to me, omits to weigh attentively the fact of the growth of tied tenancy (the colonate) which went *pari passu* with the flight of cultivators from the land. The coercion involved may well have seriously depressed production, just as the enforced collectivization in the USSR has driven down production on all except the small plots that the peasantry are permitted to cultivate for themselves. Also, discharged veterans were generally mediocre farmers, and if Augustus ceased land-grants, the Byzantine emperors introduced a 60-acre grant, complete with seed and plough team, to released servicemen. We must also recall that barbarian irruptions did mean the killing of farmers and peasants, the disruption of roads, markets and irrigation systems. The problem should also be examined whether the third-century plagues were due to a lowered physical resistance following undernourishment among cultivators, and how far climatic change affected agriculture adversely. Recent data show that precipitation was dropping slowly but consistently throughout the imperial age in the Middle East — the prosperity of north-western Syria and the elaboration of runoff farming in the Israel Negev notwithstanding. In Britain, 'classical' agriculture broke down owing to the collapse of organization and the barbarian advent. Both these phenomena preceded in various provinces the final disappearance of Roman power in the west, and restoration was carried out with increasing difficulty. Whittaker's essay, cogent as it is, proves that the problem can only be solved by continued investigation in each province.

SHIMON APPLEBAUM

ZVI RAZI, *Life, Marriage & Death in a Medieval Parish: Economy, Society and Demography in Halesowen 1270-1400*. Past and Present Publications: CUP, 1980. xiv + 162 pp. £12.

The growing number of people who have worked through a series of court rolls of any size will appreciate at once the prodigious efforts of Dr Razi. Here he presents us with the fruits of his labours on what must be one of the longest and fullest runs of manorial records. And a pretty solid harvest it is too. The reader needs a head for figures; to skip them means skipping the book. Presumably editorial considerations denied Dr Razi the luxury of a conclusion. The book is rather spoilt without one. We are not given the opportunity at the end to draw breath, stand back, and review the path threaded through the statistics. Neither are we given the chance to adjust our sight from the limited world of Halesowen to the larger world around. What was going on elsewhere?

Dr Razi has provided a wealth of information for the attention of the 'Cambridge School' and its ilk; but what of the non-specialist? This book stands in a series designed, we are told, as much for him as the specialist. Unfortunately, he is shown scant consideration. This is a shame. Here is a book about a particular local community. On the surface, we can imagine many in and around Halesowen interested in the history of their town and interested in buying a book of this title. Yet we can also imagine how few would look beyond the table of contents and the list of tables. Surely Dr Razi's editorial board could have encouraged him to write a book which would have had far greater appeal and still retained its academic integrity? This does not necessarily entail omitting material but re-ordering it (many of the tables could have been grouped at the end; that alone would have made for easier reading). Indeed, there are several points at which we might justifiably ask Dr Razi to expand his story. What, for example, was the impact of the abbot or his representatives upon the manor? To what extent can the men and women of Halesowen be pursued into the surrounding countryside; do we possess records of surrounding manors? It would be interesting to have Dr Razi's comments upon the printed edition of his records. Court rolls have so much of interest in them; it is a sad thing to see them reduced quite so comprehensively to the table and the figure.

ANDREW JONES

D O PAM, *The Hungry Years: the struggle for survival in Edmonton and Enfield before 1400*. Edmonton Hundred Historical Society, Occasional Paper, new series no 42, 1980. 31 pp. 95p.

A local history society depends for much of its success upon an enterprising and enthusiastic membership and an abundant supply of sources, whether documents or stonework. The Edmonton Hundred Historical Society is blessed with such a marriage. Its list of publications show that the marriage has been fruitful; indeed, we can expect further happy events. This is tremendously welcome. A combination of local appeal, scholarship

and readability not only ensures a healthy local society but also provides monographs which attract interest and respect across the country and beyond. The combination, however, is hard to achieve. While Mr Pam has laboured diligently, the result is not entirely successful. It seems so unfair to take local societies to task for failing to achieve the standards of a university department. But here is a study which lays claim to high scholarly credibility. Within 23 pages of text we have over 300 footnotes, by far the greater part referring to unpublished manuscripts. Much time and energy has been spent in quarrying in those tricky strata, charters and records of royal courts. Here is a local study which we can expect to make an important contribution to a wider historical understanding. Yet we are disappointed. What Mr Pam gives us is, I am afraid, a collection of facts. This gives his study of Enfield and Edmonton an antiquarian flavour which it does not deserve. But a mass of ill-digested material (eg p 25) provides us with no coherent theme. No rounded picture emerges; no significant conclusions are reached (the conclusion — p 28 — is little more than a repetition of information already provided).

Ostensibly, Mr Pam's objective is to provide a study of Enfield and Edmonton which justifies his title. Was the fourteenth century a time of impoverishment for the peasantry; was there a battle for survival, particularly in the first three decades of the century? Mr Pam adduces evidence of families falling on hard times as they fell into the financial clutches of London merchants. But families have always risen to prominence in one generation to fade in the next. What Mr Pam fails to do, right at the start of his study, is to discuss his sources. This is no mere quibble. His work is so dependent upon his sources that his readers deserve some attempt to evaluate them. We are given little or no information about legal processes in the royal courts — information which, again, the reader requires and which could have been culled from the publications of the *Selden Society* and condensed into a paragraph or two. If we had a grasp on the sources, we would then be in a better position to interpret the mass of facts. Mr Pam has had access to such marvellous sources. To introduce them to us would only serve as a compliment.

A number of minor quibbles — but their effect is cumulative and they underline the remarks already made. We do not get off to a good start. The first sentence (p 5) is redundant; it bears no relationship to what follows. An explanation of the dating (p 6) would not come amiss. Is 4 March 1338 in 1337/38 or 1338/39? We need to know a lot more about individuals. Adam Fraunceys (p 7) is a good example. Mr Pam ignores the useful biographical account provided by Miss Thrupp. The charter (p 16) could have been transcribed for us. The section on peasant strips (p 17) is not really worth having. The description of the

manors could be considerably 'tightened up' and then placed at the beginning. Too much detail is dispersed casually over too many pages. The Domesday section (pp 12–14) is far too long, and too 'exact'. Finally, while the word *demesne* (p 17) is explained, too many technical terms slip by without comment — 'benefit of clergy', 'eyre', 'patent', even 'hundred'.

With a little trouble Mr Pam's work on Enfield and Edmonton could be reworked into a substantial contribution to our knowledge of suburban London in the Middle Ages. He promises us a continuation of the story to the end of the sixteenth century. The trouble will be worth taking.

ANDREW JONES

M W GREENSLADE and D A JOHNSON (eds), *Victoria History of the County of Stafford, Volume VI*. OUP for University of London Institute of Historical Research, 1979. xix + 294 pp. Illus, maps, plans. £48.

Volume VI of the Staffordshire VCH will be of particular interest to readers of the *Review* since rather over half of its pages are taken up by four valuable essays on the agricultural history of the county. Jean R Birrell writes on medieval agriculture, and Ann J Kettle takes the story on up to 1793. The two subsequent periods, from 1793 to 1875 and 1875 to 1975 are written by C R J Currie. The remainder of the volume deals with the county's schools and the University of Keele, and with Stafford, the county town. The whole is produced to the VCH's usual high standards.

A poor, backward and thinly-settled district in 1086, especially in Cannock Forest, the county shared in the rise of population and expansion of cultivation which characterized the period between Domesday and the early fourteenth century. Assarting in the forests still left the county well wooded, and at this early time cattle and sheep already played major roles in the economy. Field systems were often irregular and complex; oats were of particular importance among arable crops, and some large acreages were given over to peas. Famine struck Staffordshire in 1315–17, as it did elsewhere, and by the 1320s some land had been abandoned. The Black Death appeared in 1349, with a second serious outbreak in 1361, leaving more land out of cultivation or leased as pasture, and numbers of ruinous farmsteads. The decline was, however, perhaps more marked in the populous manors of the south and centre of the county. Direct cultivation of demesnes declined, wage rates rose and many customary payments could not be collected, although some peasants profited from the conditions to accumulate large holdings. The tale was not entirely one of stagnation: there was much peasant activity and pasture farming flourished.

Enclosure was the dominant feature of the early modern period in Staffordshire. Permanent conversion

of arable to pasture caused relatively little unrest, and indeed was sometimes initiated by the farmers. Parliamentary enclosure in the eighteenth century was largely concerned with the remaining commons and wastes. Farming moved towards three main kinds of specialization: stock-rearing and dairying in the Moorlands, corn and dairying on the heavy lands of the county's centre, and sheep and corn on the light soils of southern districts. Changes in landownership, influenced by redistribution of monastic lands, led to more efficient estate management, and ultimately to higher rents as leases were converted to rack rents in the eighteenth century. Farms were tending to grow in size, and by this time there was increasing interest in improvement, stimulated by the expansion of nearby markets in the Potteries and Black Country. The hoeing of turnips began about 1770, and soon after some farmers were beginning to drill their seeds; heavy use was made of marl and lime as soil dressings. Oats were still important, especially in the Moorlands, and peas were regularly grown for fodder, but Staffordshire was predominantly a county of stock husbandry. Clovers and rye grass were increasingly used in the eighteenth century to improve the pastures, and efforts were made to improve both the sheep and the Staffordshire longhorn by crossing with other breeds. Horses, pigs and poultry were important supplementary livestock.

With the fall in grain prices from near the end of the Napoleonic Wars there was a tendency for landowners to encourage farmers to further shift from arable to grass. After 1793 there was a greater interest in agricultural improvement, and landlords established model farms and supported agricultural societies. Professional land agents, such as James Loch, advocated drainage and modernization of farm buildings. Four-course rotations were enforced in some leases, and roots and leys were commonly introduced where conditions favoured them, while the growth of the industrial towns encouraged market gardening and more intensive corn cropping. By the 1820s drilling and the associated horse-hoeing were common, and threshing machines were coming in. Grassland management involved the use of manures like guano and town manure, and water meadows, some long established, were widely used. On light soils the Cannock Heath sheep became dominant, though Southdowns and other breeds were kept, while Leicesters emerged as the main breed in the Moorlands. The chief development in cattle farming was the spread of dairying, for liquid milk near urban centres, and cheese, the Cheshire and Derbyshire varieties, elsewhere. The local longhorn now gave way to the Shorthorn, and for beef Herefords came into vogue. Farms continued to grow in size, and indeed James Loch, in particular, was criticized for his 'great rage for uniting farms and turning adrift honest farmers'. But there remained, nevertheless, many small

cultivators, both in dairying areas and on the claylands.

In the hundred years after 1875 Staffordshire was somewhat insulated from the full effects of foreign competition by an already high proportion of pasture land. More of the remaining arable went down to grass and farmers relied increasingly on cattle, especially on sales of liquid milk, feeding their stock on imported foodstuffs. Industrial expansion provided larger urban markets but also created problems — land was lost to towns and roads, farms were split up, crops damaged by smoke, and labour drawn away from farming. The shrinking number of arable holdings concentrated on producing fodder for fattening stores, while market gardening expanded near the towns. By 1939 permanent grass occupied 78 per cent of total crop and grass lands. While sheep numbers tended to fall, cattle numbers rose, to outstrip sheep by two to one in 1971–73. Sales of liquid milk displaced cheese in dairying areas as railways provided speedy channels to London, Birmingham, Burton, and other large markets. Eventually, in consequence, the supremacy of the Dairy Shorthorn was threatened, and by 1965 the high-yielding Friesian was predominant. Herefords were still by the late 1930s the chief breed of store cattle. In the declining flocks Shropshires gradually gave way to a variety of breeds, though by 1960 the main ones were Cluns and Kerries. As elsewhere, estate lands came on to the market and owner-occupation increased; farms continued to grow in size. The average farm (including smallholdings of more than 1 acre) rose from about 42 acres in 1875 to 60 acres in 1960, though such figures disguise the wide variations in size to be found in different farming districts. In the early years of this century rents, at between 25s and 33s per acre, were lower than a hundred years before. By 1973, with a shrunken total acreage and much mechanization, farming employed only 12,131 people and was but a minor activity in the county.

It is impossible to mention all the aspects of Staffordshire farming discussed in this volume. The choice of items referred to here must reflect to some extent the reviewer's interests and sense of the significant. There is a great deal of primary material which cannot even be hinted at in a review, and which might send not a few scholars scurrying to Staffordshire sources. If there is to be criticism, then perhaps it could be wished that the discussions were related more to broader regional or national trends, and that so much richness on what was the county's main livelihood might have been permitted to fill the whole, rather than only a half, of one not very thick volume.

G E MINGAY

M L PARRY and T R SLATER (eds), *The Making of the Scottish Countryside*, Croom Helm, 1980. 327 pp. 13 tables, 41 figures, 23 plates. £22.50.

This volume is a collection of essays by twelve scholars which attempts to trace the evolution of the rural landscape in Scotland from prehistoric times to the mid-nineteenth century. The study has more cohesion than other works of this kind because of the clear chronological framework, the recurrence of the major themes of continuity, change and regional variation throughout and also because the essays are cast in a broadly uniform format, each author indicating the state of current scholarship in his field and ending with a conclusion pointing to areas requiring further research.

The collection is divided into three main sections: 'the Early Countryside', from prehistoric times to the seventeenth century; 'Accelerated Change', from the later seventeenth to the early nineteenth century; 'the Reshaped Countryside', which deals with the classic period of the 'Agricultural Revolution' between 1790 and 1850. Part 1 consists of four surveys of the published literature by G Whittington, R A Dodgshon and A Fenton. These writers show how the countryside was in a condition of slow but constant adaptation due to climatic and demographic influences before 1600 and demonstrate the imprudence of facile generalizations in the light of profound local variation and scanty knowledge. In Part 2 I Whyte summarizes his published views on the organizational changes in Scottish rural society in the seventeenth century. This essay stands rather uneasily beside one by I H Adams which is more inclined to stress the drama of late eighteenth-century revolution ignoring the increasing volume of evidence (much of it in this book) that the 'old' society before 1750 was far from static. More impressive contributions in this section come from L Timperley, who meticulously reconstructs the pattern of land-ownership in eighteenth-century Scotland, and M L Parry who has effectively employed aerial photography techniques to measure the movement in the size of cultivated acreage in south-east Scotland between 1750 and 1850.

Part 3 is perhaps the least satisfactory in the book. The standard of scholarship does not decline markedly but there is less novelty and so less impact. J B Caird surveys the literature on agrarian change but his conclusion amounts to a re-affirmation of the old textbook orthodoxy that the major influences were the late eighteenth-century 'improving landlords'. Some of the studies cited in his footnotes are inconsistent with this view, and the implicit tension between his verdict and the arguments advanced by Whyte, Dodgshon and Parry (especially on p 193 of the latter's contribution) are not recognized. The articles by D G Lockhart and J P Shaw on the Planned Villages and the New Rural Industries respectively are very competent pieces of scholarship which contain few surprises. J M Lindsay on Commercial Use of Woodland examines a little-known aspect of agrarian change but given the localized emphasis of his investigations his conclusions

must remain tentative. Finally, T R Slater provides a preliminary outline of the development of gardens and ornamental parks around the houses of the Scottish landed class from the later seventeenth century.

The impression left by the collection as a whole is a mixed one. Undoubtedly several of the essays contribute significantly to our understanding of agrarian development in Scotland. Moreover, the standard of scholarship is maintained at a high level throughout. Almost all the articles are based on an examination of relevant manuscript or on a thorough quarrying of reliable secondary sources. The days when Scottish agrarian history could be written mainly from the printed views of the late eighteenth century improvers and the Old Statistical Account are now clearly over. Yet, some of the old habits linger on, especially in the treatment of the period of crucial change in the eighteenth century. The problem of the origins of structural change in this phase, arguably the central issue in Scottish agrarian development before 1850, is not dealt with satisfactorily. Partly this is because only the essays by Adams and Caird examine this key question directly and it is unfortunate that both of these authors are committed to the old simplicities of heroic improvers transforming the Scottish countryside. No one doubts the significance of landlords but they could have done little, whatever their powers in theory, without the evolution of a suitable social, cultural and economic environment in this period. There seems little awareness of the major obstacles to rapid change. Superficial comparison with the failure of agrarian reform in highland society would demonstrate that landlords had not simply to be 'enlightened' in order to successfully promote 'improvement' but also required tenant farmers of financial substance and appropriate values.

This suggests a more profound weakness in the collection. Most of the authors are historical geographers by training and profession. Their approach on the whole is to describe what happened rather than why it happened. In describing the process of change they provide a valuable framework for future work but they have little to say on the main influences which produced the significant alterations. The major forces of urban growth, home and overseas markets and population increase which shaped the development of agrarian capitalism are here scarcely mentioned. Furthermore, while the physical consequences of change are well-documented, the impact on the social structure and social composition of the rural community remains elusive. This is an important but somewhat restricted examination of 'the making of the Scottish countryside'.

T M DEVINE

FRANCES J SHAW, *The Northern and Western Islands of Scotland: Their Economy and Society in the Seventeenth*

Century. Edinburgh, John Donald, 1980. ix + 270 pp, 5 maps, 6 tables. £15.

It is not altogether an original idea to compare the Western Isles of Scotland with the Northern Isles in their two subgroups, Shetland and Orkney. Easy generalizations which imply such comparison have, in fact, often been made; the Western Isles were originally Celtic in their social constitution, the Northern were Norse, and many consequential differences are imagined to flow from these historic facts. But it is an entirely original feat to make such a comparison through the great range of basic sources, thoroughly examined, that Frances Shaw uses in this study. So thorough and careful are her methods that it is difficult to see her conclusions being set aside.

The main question is how far the differences of ethnic origin have made for corresponding differences of social structure and economy in the seventeenth century of which she is writing, and how far the differences that can patently be seen were due to variations in physical endowment or geographical position. It may be disappointing to some that no resounding or simple answer can be given; perhaps inevitably both forms of influences are shown to operate. But that is merely to be true to the evidence, much of it in tiny details, that is assembled, and Frances Shaw does show fairly the aspects of social life in which one influence or the other prevailed. There was a clear difference in the terms of proprietorship of land as between the two groups of islands and consequently in the structure of landownership, with a great deal of fragmentation even of individual townships in the Northern Isles. This influence, moreover, ran right down the social scale to affect the standing even of small-holders and tenants. Yet the underlying economy, mainly stemming from the use of land, was basically similar throughout the two groups. Everywhere were to be found townships inhabited by clusters of joint tenants and their dependants. The occupiers depended for their food supply on grain, grown on an area of arable land divided into infield and outfield and generally sectioned to give the tenants some form of individual occupation, but they also had the use of common pastures on which the prevailing pastoral economy critically depended. The balance between arable and pasture might vary of course, but this was a matter of physical endowment. Small groups of craftsmen were also generally to be found, earning a living in much the same way wherever they might be and usually having pieces of land to help out. One peculiarity of the Western Isles, however, was the presence of a few people of special skill and function, such as physicians, chamberlains, musicians, historians, and bards, who were maintained directly by chieftains rather than by rewards from their customers. Considerable differences were to be observed in productive results: the Western Isles was, broadly speaking, an

area of normal self-sufficiency or even surplus of grain, the basic foodstuff, but also depended on an export trade in cattle; Shetland had a big grain deficit and depended on export of fish and processed animal products; Orkney from a relatively broad arable surface was able to sustain a considerable surplus of grain as well as meeting her own food requirements. Clearly it was the natural endowment of land together with geographical position — allowing for example the export of live cattle from the Western Isles — that produced these differences.

There was also, it is argued, a distinctiveness of social feeling that permeated all social relationships. 'Society in the Western Isles was still rooted in the old Celtic kin-based traditions' and mutual obligations and benefits were deeply felt across boundaries of wealth and social position. The Northern Isles, on the other hand, had no such binding obligations between the social classes. Superficially more equalitarian, it was also a more individualistic society, with less common feeling to bridge divisions, and less chance of social action to give the individual protection.

Up to now, our knowledge of the society and economy of the islands in the seventeenth century has been based, except for Orkney, on retrospective generalizations dating often from the end of the eighteenth century. One of the main points of interest in this book, with its intensive use of contemporary sources, must be how far these preconceptions are borne out in a detailed reading of the records of the time. It is something of a surprise to find how true they were to the facts. The peculiar position and functions of the tacksmen of the west are shown much as we have understood them from the later writings. The description of townships as working agricultural entities fits in well enough with eighteenth-century description. The growth of the cattle trade and its importance to the whole economy of the Western Isles is vividly and authoritatively depicted but it is growth into a familiar eighteenth-century form that emerges. None of these, or indeed of any of the many assembled details of economy and social structure, may be surprising but it is none the less important to have the existing notions placed upon the solid ground of scholarship. Scholars of the future will find this an indispensable book for they may begin their work from much firmer footing than previously. And the general reader, if he is not initially repelled by the necessarily complicated description of the land systems, will be carried by the multiplication of subtle details into these societies, distant in time, yet still with echoes and traces in the problems and ways of living today.

MALCOLM GRAY

IAN H ADAMS (ed), *Papers of Peter May, Land Surveyor, 1749-1793*. Edinburgh, Scottish History Society,

1979. xlii + 314 pp. Annual subscription £8 to the Treasurer, Department of Scottish History, University of Glasgow, from whom this and all other back volumes in print may be obtained by subscribers.

The Scottish History Society has, in more than 90 years of its existence, edited a number of useful sources for agrarian history — notably *Cockburn of Ormiston's Letters to his Gardener* and the *Monymusk Papers*, both on eighteenth-century 'improvers', and Robin Adam's more recent two-volume edition of *Sutherland Estate Papers* that sets the scene for the great clearances. This substantial publication usefully continues that tradition, but in a new direction, by illustrating for the first time the career of an important land surveyor in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The surveyors are a subject Dr Adams has made his own, and his introduction clearly sets Peter May's work (mainly in North-East Scotland, the Highlands and in Bute) in its general and particular setting. Both enclosure and the simple redistribution of runrig strips were possible without surveyors, but their expertise so facilitated change that most of the great lairds anxious to push improvement tried to retain one. May was a protégé of the sixth Earl of Findlater, who employed him on his own estate, obtained government business for him from the Annexed Estates Commissioners, and recommended him to his nephew James Grant of Grant and to the family of the Earl of Bute.

The papers will demonstrate the range of problems that beset a busy surveyor, though the absence of any reproduction of the plans makes it difficult to understand fully the central function of his work. One feature that does come across is the concern of the surveyor and the landowner to devise a division of farms at once equable and efficient, 'noticing when they are too large and would bear a division or when small to adjoin them with some others so as to make them commodious and afford a comfortable living to the possessors'. This concern extended from cartography to management: in an interesting letter (p 111) May writes to a factor asking what should be done for a tenant about to go bankrupt following a voluntary reallocation of land undertaken not by a surveyor but by birlaymen. (The editor for once falters in describing a birlayman as *presiding* over a birlay court: they were locals who served as jurors, or assessors, of such a court, presided over by a baron baillie who was the laird's nominee.) May also emerges as an improving farmer on his own account, and as a general planner meditating, for instance, on the prospects for the island of Bute: 'your manufacture of herring nets on the one hand, and the cotton manufacture on the other, should keep the young people of the Island in business and consequently make them useful to themselves and to the community — a very different line from which is observable among many of the young ones just now. I

was lately along with the minister of Kingarth visiting the schools. . . .'

The world of the improvers, with their boundless energy, simple optimism and over-estimation of their own ability to bring about benevolent change unaided is well evoked by this volume.

T C SMOUT

WILHELM ABEL, *Agricultural Fluctuations in Europe. From the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*. Translated by Olive Ordish, with a foreword and bibliography by Joan Thirsk. Methuen, 1980. 363 pp, 76 figures, 30 tables. £17.50.

In a recent issue, this reviewer drew attention to the outstanding merits of the third German edition of this work, and foreshadowed a translation by Olive Ordish which has rapidly followed. Joan Thirsk, in a brief introduction, draws attention to England as a special case, but suggests the need to observe and learn from the European scene. She has appended an invaluable bibliography on agricultural fluctuations in England. The translator has been remarkably skilful in making the text readable in English. She has slightly reduced loquacious passages and over-learned references, but has greatly smoothed the somewhat crabbed gothic aridity of Abel's style. She has assisted the reader by including abbreviated references within the text, and, unlike Abel, she has printed the whole bibliography at the end. She has, judiciously, somewhat increased the number of paragraphs, and considerably sweetened the reader's task. Footnotes containing non-bibliographical information appear at the back, and the reviewer likes this, particularly because it must have reduced the price. All the valuable graphs and tables in the original are retained, and one welcomes the fine subject index absent in the German edition. The appendix is contracted but in a masterly fashion.

D J DAVIS

WINFRIED SCHULZE, *Bauerlicher Widerstand und feudale Herrschaft in der frühen Neuzeit*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt, Frommann-Holzboog, 1980. 344 pp. (Neuzeit im Aufbau, Bd 6).

Winfried Schulze's explanation of peasant dissatisfaction and resultant action within the Holy Roman Empire from 1525 to the French Revolution is firmly set in the context of central Europe and other contiguous countries. The excellent bibliography illustrates the author's mastery of opinion in the west and in socialist countries on the fashionable topic of conflict. He is not involved in sociological or Marxist jargon. His emphasis is upon resistance to excessive demands by the territorial lord and the development of legal or other subtle attempts to obtain redress. After the revolt of 1525 which obsessed the nobility for more than 250 years, there was every

reason for peasant and noble to seek a traditional or legal solution to their problems. While there were a number of bloody revolts in south Germany and the Hapsburg territories, the focus of most of the trouble, the violence was often ritualistic or theatrical, while complex legal processes were employed. The documents, 41 in number, which occupy exactly half of the volume, are highly stylized and excessively formal. They are all in German, and provide an excellent beginners' course in reading florid documents alien to the English language tradition for their meaning can easily be divined. So stylized and legal are these sources that Schulze considers an important line for future study would be to seek to penetrate the mind of the peasant through folk song, folk lore and other available means. Certainly the documents provide little assistance in this.

The volume, rich in ideas and suggestions, is packed with novel insights. Small territories were a frequent focus of trouble: the small lord was excessively dependent on feudal dues. Like the great prince he was now entering a money economy in the late feudal (that is, the early modern) world, and was forced to make extra demands on the peasants. The small lord could give little back to the peasant. At this time one is apt to think of the Holy Roman Empire as a nullity, but Schulze emphasizes the peasants' effective resort to its highest courts, while equally he could refer his case to the universities for advice, and some bold lawyers engaged in litigation for the peasants. Strife was common where lord and people had religious differences and in areas under military occupation.

Schulze subtly distinguishes grades of resistance, the general reluctance to be violent, and the consciousness of princes that revolt could spread and that precautions must be taken. Clearly, studies in diffusion could be of great interest. He places his emphasis upon peasant resistance in the context of progress towards the modern state. The peasant reacted as the prince built his costly new palace and hired soldiers to fight his wars. It is difficult to imagine this feudal world, such a contrast with contemporary conditions in Great Britain, but it is worth doing in case there are parallels unthought of as yet.

While this is a complex and demanding book, it is jargon-free, and the English reader could find it very rewarding. The author realizes he is a pioneer, and stimulates the reader by kaleidoscopic strands of thought and suggestions for future work.

D J DAVIS

OTTO ULBRICHT, *Englische Landwirtschaft in Kurhannover in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts. Ansätze zu historischer Diffusionsforschung*. Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1980. 407 pp. (Schriften zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialforschung, Band 32.)

Ulbricht's dissertation (Kiel) examines the influence of progressive English agriculture upon Hanover in the latter half of the eighteenth century. He tells of the contention that Hanover, whose Elector was the King of England, was the portal for agricultural innovation. He, therefore, sets out to examine the truth of this, employing methods derived from diffusion studies, in particular the ideas of Rogers and Shoemaker (*Communication of Innovation*, 2nd edn, 1971). While their ideas and models repeatedly appear they do not dominate the book, which, for the most part, is a detailed statement of happenings in Hanover.

This is, in fact, the story of what did not happen. England is pictured as making great progress with enclosures, new intense rotations, introducing red clover and turnips, new ploughs, machine sowing, and horse hoe husbandry. A number of Hanoverians, few knowing English, and few visiting the country, wrote about these innovations, and, as local patriots, tended to reject them as of very little use in Hanover. In many ways they were right for, geographically, many of these innovations could have been of no great value. Ulbricht, for example, pays but little attention to the geographical diversity of Hanover with its great areas of heath, *geest* and marsh. At the end of the century, however, Thae wrote his *Einleitung zur Kenntniz der englischen Landwirthschaft und ihrer neueren und theoretischen Fortschritte in Rücksicht auf Vervollkommnung deutscher Landwirthschaft für denkende Landwirthe und Cameralisten* (3 vols, Hanover, 1798–1804), and this work, backed by much accumulated knowledge, assisted a slow revolution in agriculture during the first half of the nineteenth century.

In telling the story Ulbricht explains conditions in England, emphasizing that the social system, the ownership pattern, and the field systems were much more favourable to change. He tells of the main writers on agriculture: Münchhausen, Beckmann, Bergen, and Thae, and outlines the effects of those visits to England made mainly or incidentally to study agriculture. Finally, he examines each English innovation in turn and records sadly little progress before 1800, but, when he looks elsewhere, he sees a considerable advance in Prussia, the real door for innovation. Even the famous Celle agricultural society missed its opportunities to propagate new ways. Hanover was positively disadvantaged by the fact that its sovereign lived abroad and had no opportunity to hasten change.

Ulbricht employs a great weight of evidence to confute Schröder-Lembke's idea that Hanover was the natural route by which innovation entered the country. His volume is informative reading, though of course it bears all the marks of a dissertation — proving the obvious, demonstrating detailed reading, and incorporating the most interesting information in the footnotes. Yet it is not confined to the initiation and spread of change in Hanover, but, glancing elsewhere,

it is an excellent compendium of information about agricultural progress in Germany, 1775–1800.

D J DAVIS

DAVID HEY, *Packmen, Carriers and Packhorse Roads: Trade and Communications in North Derbyshire and South Yorkshire*. Leicester UP, Leicester, 1980. 279 pp. 32 illustrations, maps and figures. £12.50.

This is a handsomely-produced and important book, being the first intensive local study of early modern road transport. More significantly, Dr Hey's study is the first to integrate a regional assessment of transport development with that of agriculture, rural industry, and domestic trade. Fittingly, in a book dedicated to W G Hoskins, documentary and cartographic evidence is neatly blended with that of the countryside itself: there is the distinctive atmosphere of the southern Pennines and the Peak about this volume.

It is the physical evidence of the countryside which forms its first section. Dr Hey puts substance to contemporary fears about the problems of finding one's way in a desolate landscape both in describing the main transport routes of the area and in his analysis of the chronology of planting signposts and building bridges. While many of the flagstone causeys dated from the sixteenth century and earlier, and many of the great bridges were of medieval origin, there was a marked concentration of the erection of packhorse bridges and the distinctive local 'guide stoops' into the century after 1660. In Derbyshire, a great number of stoops, the waymarkers, was erected in 1709, while being typically more canny with the county purse, the West Riding Justices only succeeded in thus marking the way after 1733. Both processes point very clearly to the significant expansion of road traffic in the region two generations in advance of the turnpike movement.

The same period also saw the expansion of use of wheeled vehicles in the region, under the pressure of demand from its iron, stone and textile industries. Further stimulus to these trades was derived from the navigation of the rivers Idle and Don. While such a hilly region naturally saw an unusually long survival of the packhorse as a means of carriage, by the middle of the eighteenth century carts and waggons were common, even if their use tended still to be concentrated into the summer months. Because of this change, road routes in the region gradually tended to become less direct, being forced by the new traffics to follow gentler courses. Both features are well-documented in European transport history, but make a useful point in being applied clearly to England.

Having thus assessed routes and vehicles, and the patterns of demand placed upon these transport services, Dr Hey concludes by assessing the structure of markets, the retail trade, and traffic in farm produce, demonstrating in the process his considerable expertise

in the use of probate inventories. This analysis makes very clear the extensive role played by the by-employed farmer in all these activities. In this relatively harsh environment the transport industry provided a vital income supplement to the agriculturalist. The personal economy of the carrier in England remains shadowy until the later eighteenth century, from which slightly more revealing records survive, but in this book Dr Hey has succeeded in suggesting some of its substance.

This is in all an excellent local study, and one that entices one to retrace with the author some of these carrier routes. It clearly formed the basis for a very lively local history class at the University of Sheffield, and the author's enthusiasm for his subject is clear both in the text and in his presence in two of the splendid illustrations. However, the certainty of judgement displayed in discussing the history of the region is not matched when connections are made to the wider historical environment. In consequence, the book is at times rather limited in perspective. Perhaps because of this Dr Hey errs on the side of understatement in his conclusions and is not always happy in making links to wider transport history. There are, too, some flaws, as in the comments on the costs of carriage towards the end of the book (p 219). Aiming at posterity, no doubt, there appears on p 235 an incongruous table offering metric equivalents for £ s d. Happily, these are small flaws in an important, well-produced, and nicely-illustrated book of considerable interest to both agrarian and transport historians.

J A CHARTRES

ANDREW CHARLESWORTH, *Social Protest in a Rural Society: the Spatial Diffusion of the Captain Swing Disturbances of 1830–1831*, Historical Geography Research Group, Research Paper Series, 1 (October 1979) and Geo. Abstracts Ltd, Norwich. 78 pp. No price given.

This short monograph represents the application of geography's new clothes to the analysis of the 'Swing' protests of August 1830 to March 1831. By introducing and testing precise spatial variables it corrects and extends the analysis of the earlier generation of studies of rural protest which culminated in the publication of Hobsbawm and Rudé's *Captain Swing* in 1969. In so doing, it takes the opportunity to examine the protests further in the light of the more complex and subtle models suggested by Edward Thompson and Charles Tilly. The net result is a useful if turgid addition to knowledge.

Charlesworth tests three naïve spatial models of the diffusion of the protest derived from Hobsbawm and Rudé: the capillary; the highway; and the market models. None are shown to be satisfactory in statistical terms, and the author was thus led to seek alternatives to naïve concepts of immiseration. Radicalism and its

influence is therefore the explanation offered here, with the main roads from the capital being the routes along which the 'link-men' bearing protest came. Such influences, and those of local social intercourse on the day of rest are here suggested as possible explanations of the relatively high incidence of events on Mondays. Fortunately stopping short of a Taine conspiracy theory, Charlesworth has mined existing data efficiently to point to important features of the protest, and suggested that intensive studies of key communities of revolt, such as Thatcham and Crowmarsh Gifford, may be the most rewarding course for further research. To the historian, then, this geographer has indicated the unsurprising conclusion that simplistic models of the spread of rural protest are unsatisfactory, but presented little new evidence. This is a useful critique of, but no substitute for, *Captain Swing*.

J A CHARTRES

PAMELA HORN, *The Rural World 1780-1850: social change in the English countryside*. Hutchinson, 1980. 331 pp. £5.95 (paperback).

With a productivity worthy of an improving farmer Dr Horn has added another volume to her works on rural society. As was the case with some of her previous books this one is mainly a reliable synthesis rather than innovative in thought or based upon primary research. That is not to say that a wide range of primary authority is not quoted but it tends to be from familiar sources, some indeed made familiar by the author herself in her research articles on Oxfordshire and Bedfordshire. Although the subtitle refers to the 'English' countryside this self-denying ordinance is not always observed; there are some references to Wales and, perhaps more surprisingly, to the Highland clearances.

Dr Horn surveys the rural community at the end of the eighteenth century with an emphasis on regional and local distinctions, the social pre-eminence of the aristocracy and gentry and the state of the roads. These traditional relationships were to be disturbed by the pressures of improvement and war, the wartime strains falling particularly harshly upon the casualties of enclosure. However, those above the bottom layer of rural society enjoyed some prosperity. The collapse of that prosperity is then shown as intensifying the divisions in rural society, epitomized in the savage penalties dealt to rioters of 1830-31, the Tolpuddle case, and the new poor law with its deliberate intent of deterrence by monotony, humiliation and regimentation.

A similar pattern of division and distrust permeates the discussion of village institutions. Education and charity could be used as a means of social control, farmers opposed allotments in case labourers became

independent, absentee clerics drew their tithes while in open parishes Methodism prospered. The chapter on crime and punishment is a catalogue of changes in the law. The game laws, from the Black Act of 1722 to the Poaching Prevention Act of 1862, take pride of place. Critics said that the Poaching Prevention Act turned the county police into rate-paid gamekeepers but Dr Horn does not really consider that relationship, nor does she deal with fish and salmon.

By mid-century the roles in rural society — of labourer, farmer and landlord — are pictured by Dr Horn as being more distinct. Rural life was less boisterous, and indeed less cruel in its amusements, as the pressures on the poor towards reliability and sobriety increased. The higher social groups became more private in their amusements. There is a tendency in this book to stress the underlying sources of conflict in rural society. A constant litany properly pervades it, the plight of the agricultural labourer whose conditions, housing and diet were seemingly less well regarded than the farm animals.

J H PORTER

SUSANNA WADE MARTINS, *A Great Estate at Work, the Holkham estate and its inhabitants in the nineteenth century*. Cambridge UP, 1980. xiv + 289 pp. Illus. £24.

This is an extremely interesting and enjoyable book. When I worked at Holkham, the late earl of Leicester, rendered understandably uneasy by my interest in marriage settlements and family wills, caused me to end my researches at the death of Coke of Norfolk, in 1842. I remember a furtive glance at one forbidden document — a list of the investments of the second earl, Coke's heir. Sadly I put it away; Mrs Martins prints it in full. It is of the highest interest. After the South Sea Bubble until 1855, no significant investment was made except in land. Then £11,640 was put into the local railway. In 1870, £10,891 went into shares in the Great Indian Peninsular Railway. Thereafter Indian and Home Rails attracted further large purchases, until in 1886 diversification allowed money to be put into New South Wales $\frac{3}{4}$ per cents. Another stage was reached when 2000 Guinness shares were bought in 1887. In the period 1870-90 no less than £280,000 was put into the stock market, an investment which yielded £11,000 in 1890. The second Earl, therefore, was living well within his means, although income from rents fell in these years by £10,000 a year. Even when a figure for rents of £31,000 was recorded in 1900, compared with the peak figure of about £58,000 in 1877, the second Earl, as Mrs Martins points out, was in no way obliged to modify his way of life. In the nineteenth century, then, agricultural prosperity before 1878 rose sufficiently to enable the Cokes to ride out the disaster that followed.

Otherwise, the evidence used by Mrs Martins for the period after 1842 seems disappointing. 'It is very unfortunate', she writes, 'that so little remains to help us explain the second earl's financial affairs.' Nor has she found it possible to give a very satisfactory account of the second Earl's influence on agricultural developments in Norfolk; the relations of the Earl and his agents with the tenants are elucidated less effectively than one might have hoped. The correspondence recorded in the estate office letter books became less detailed after Blaikie's retirement as agent in 1832. Evidently the advent of Keary in 1851 did not cause the correspondence going in and out of the estate office to become more informative. Perhaps improved transport lessened the need for letter-writing. The result is that Mrs Martins relies on Keary's descriptive survey of 1851 and on another valuable source that she has done well to exploit — the answers submitted by Coke tenants to R N Bacon's questionnaire for his RASE prize essay written at the end of Coke of Norfolk's life (a source which I missed). She offers, therefore, much of interest on agricultural developments on the estate in the 1840s but less thereafter.

The great value of this book, however, is not in its analysis of the conduct of landlords but in its study of the conditions of life of tenants and labourers. Here again, however, evidence on developments in agricultural practice and in farm economics is scanty. Mrs Martins tells us: 'The sources available for studying the activities of the tenants are limited. Very few farm accounts survive and it is difficult to trace descendants of the nineteenth-century farmers.' This disclaimer is only an overture to the most successful and interesting section of this book. The two longest chapters, 'The tenant farmer and his farm' and 'The landlord and the labourer' are dominated by fascinating accounts of farm buildings and of labourers' cottages, accompanied by attractive photographs. Mrs Martins argues convincingly that the quality of farm buildings was an important factor in determining the quality of tenants that an estate could attract. She cites the interesting criticisms made by Coke's agent of the Duke of Norfolk's farm buildings which attracted tenants of a lower calibre than those of Lord Leicester. She suggests that the successes of the Coke estate in the nineteenth century — steady increase in productivity and in rents followed by comparative resilience in depression — were facilitated by a high level of landlord's spending on farm buildings. It reached its height in the period 1850–85; the lateness of the second date implies that farm improvements were sometimes offered as a means of retaining tenants who might otherwise have quit, especially by helping them to adapt to the increased emphasis on livestock. The book shows also that the second Earl took considerable interest in cottages, which were usually let directly by the estate; not much was spent on them in proportion to estate income, but

their standards steadily rose. Mrs Martins has made a significant contribution to knowledge and anyone interested in farming history should study this book with care.

R A C PARKER

MERLIN WATERSON, *The Servants' Hall: a Domestic History of Erddig*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980. xxiii + 240 pp. 137 plates. £8.95.

Merlin Waterson's book is both handsome and unusual: handsome in its many fascinating pictures and its quality as an attractive piece of book production; unusual in dealing with three separate but related topics — the history of Erddig, the house, and its owners, the history of the servants who lived and worked there, and the history of a most impressive rescue operation carried out by the National Trust since 1973. The least satisfactory element of a readable text is the history of the estate, for we learn relatively little of the Yorke family who in the eighteenth century came to acquire it, or of the nature of the landed property that supported it, while the financial reasons for the house's fearful decay in the present century hardly appear: the owners' eccentricity would not seem a sufficient explanation by itself. (In the final stages of the long decline to 'the verge of total dereliction' the house itself suffered serious subsidence from the National Coal Board's decision to mine beneath it.)

Many of the splendid photographs show brilliantly the extraordinary transformation that the National Trust has achieved from a state of almost unbelievable dilapidation and neglect. They show also the most unusual feature of the house and the book — the numerous fascinating portraits of the servants who maintained the house and its park in more prosperous times. The Yorkes were truly always eccentric in one respect at least, in commissioning more portraits of their servants than they did of their own family. In addition they wrote reams of verse praising their staff and frequently corresponded with them. Mr Waterson has made excellent use of these unusual sources, as well as the more familiar inventories and accounts that have survived.

This is much more than a picture book of an important house. It throws much light on the people who served it, without whose cheap labour the country-house way of life could not have existed, how they lived, and their relations with their employer. The book fills one, too, with admiration for the work of the National Trust, though it has to be said that an impersonal economic force, the great inflation of land prices of the 1970s, played no small role in the survival of Erddig.

G E MINGAY

JILL FRANKLIN, *The Gentleman's Country House and its Plan 1835-1914*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981. xvi, 279 pp. 74 illustrations, 70 plans. £15.95.

This beautifully produced and handsomely illustrated volume is concerned with the country houses built from just before Victoria's accession to the Great War. There is perhaps a tendency to discount the Victorian country house in favour of its Georgian or earlier forerunner, and it comes as something of a shock to find on the first page that there were well over a thousand, and perhaps as many as two thousand houses built in the period covered by the book. Only a minority were built by landed gentry of course, for this was the great era of the wealthy industrialist, merchant and banker turned country gentleman. The scale of many of the houses is breathtaking, and although it was possible to build the more modest residences for as little as £10,000-£30,000, the great edifices, especially those built for the established aristocracy, ran to well over £100,000, with the Duke of Westminster's remodelled Eaton Hall topping £600,000.

The cost of the houses owed something to technological innovations: in the supply of pure water, up-to-date forms of sanitation, elaborate bathrooms and lavatories, central heating, and the introduction of gas and electric lighting. More significant, however, was the design and sheer scale of the house, especially as architects provided for the fashionable 'medieval' great hall, with galleries, balconies and hammerbeam roof, and went in for assymetric designs with high, steeply-pitched roofs broken by conical turrets, hipped gables and various wedge shapes to create a fantastic gothic silhouette. Inside the plan of the big house was complicated, catering for a growing taste for privacy and separation of rooms by function, the ladies' section round the morning room and drawing room for instance, placed at a distance from the gentlemen's suite of study, billiard room, gun room, and smoking room. In the more elaborate houses there were separate staircases for the family, the nursery, the bachelors and the servants, as many as six or seven in all; and in the butler's department, for example, there might be rooms set aside solely for brushing, cleaning boots and shoes, knives, and lamps; one house even had a room for the ironing of the newspapers. The servants' quarters had to be extensive to accommodate a staff which normally ran between 15 and 40, and were designed to achieve separation of the sexes and to ensure that the servants had no view of the grounds and were unable to overlook the family. The rigid separation of servants by status and function, and the complete lack of consideration of the saving of labour, made the houses highly dependent on the services of a large body of servants. The heavy use of open fires, for example, required much work in cleaning, laying and replenishing: Bulstrode Park had 44 fires burning on a typical November day. Vast quantities of coal were consumed,

and in some houses iron railways were provided to carry coal from the store into the basement, the one at Osmaston Manor having a length of 'about 300 feet with curves, turntables, etc.'.

There is much more detail to which it is impossible to do justice. Mrs Franklin analyses the owners of 380 of the houses, finding that the proportion built by manufacturers, bankers, professional men, and other newcomers rose from 47 per cent in 1835-54 to as much as 83 per cent in 1895-1914. Among the *parvenus* of 1875-94 were F J Clarke, the originator of Clarke's Blood Mixture, a 'typically Victorian universal panacea', Sir Henry Doulton, the pioneer of glazed sanitary ware, a Courage and a Bass of the brewing families, E J Horniman of tea fame, and Robert Hudson of Hudson's soap. There are also discussions of the choice of site and the difficulties of building, particularly that of keeping control of costs.

The core of the book, however, lies in the examination of the plans of 70 houses, taking up over a hundred pages, revealing just how country-house families passed their days. This is complemented by a valuable catalogue listing for the houses mentioned in the book, the date of building, their owners, and references to primary and secondary sources. And the author does not omit to consider the impact on country houses of changing architectural fashions, new economic conditions and contemporary social developments. For once a dustsheet blurb is amply justified: the author does succeed admirably in bringing to life a lost social world.

G E MINGAY

DENYS THOMPSON (ed), *Change and Tradition in Rural England: An anthology of writings on country life*. CUP, 1980. xi, 291 pp. Illus. £10.50.

Denys Thompson rightly insists at the outset that his book 'is in no way an exercise in nostalgia'. This anthology is not just one more sentimental evocation of 'Merrie England' and 'the good old days', but it does represent a protest against the belief that any sympathetic appraisal of 'the world we have lost' can be dismissed with a slick reference to the 'Merrie England' formula. Moreover, Thompson is equally unimpressed by the corresponding clichés of the progressives, from the 'vast improvements, Ma'am' that so irritated Cobbett to current jargon about land-use efficiency.

He offers here a carefully-balanced selection of writings that describe and analyse pre-industrial rural society and culture. The hardness of the life, its uncertainties and inequities, are neither glossed over nor excused but its rationale and the psychological fulfilment that it could provide are both acknowledged and scrutinized. Its importance lies in its insistence upon significant factors not revealed in scientific statistics or standard historical records. No one reading

this book can ever again talk glibly of the 'unskilled' agricultural labourer of the pre-industrial period, and it pays due tribute to the local knowledge and expertise unrecognized by the administrators of the post-industrial compulsory Education Acts.

George Sturt, author of *Change in the Village* and *The Wheelwright's Shop*, who has been a central figure for Thompson ever since the publication (with F R Leavis) of *Culture and Environment* in 1933, is very much the king-pin here. And legitimately so, since the collection demonstrates that Sturt was not only the most challenging thinker among the rural commentators but also the most accomplished writer of English prose. But he is well supported in this anthology by such expected writers as Cobbett and Jefferies and by more modern authorities including Walter Rose, Thomas Hennell, Flora Thompson, and Adrian Bell. Joseph Arch speaks for himself, and we hear the experience of Joseph Ashby of Tysoe at second-hand through the excellent biographical memoir by his daughter. The extent to which these very different writers agree in their presentation of the old folk-culture is impressive, and Thompson creates a coherent context for their work, the cumulative message of which cannot be ignored. Anyone sceptical

of the very existence of the so-called 'organic community' would do well to read this book.

But, as a meditation upon the quality of life, this is as much a book about the present and future as about the past. Thompson believes that the material collected here represents vital evidence for the current debate about leisure in a technological age. Leisure, he argues, 'has proved a barren gift' because, in Sturt's words, 'unlike the industry of a peasantry, commercial wage-earning cannot satisfy the cravings of a man's soul at the same time that it occupies his body'. The degradation of the assembly line conveyor belt cannot be justified in terms of shorter working hours and subsidized cultural opportunities. The appalling split for most of the population between 'work' and 'play' is itself the curse. So a book that begins with the cottage-culture of two centuries ago ends with the frustrations of our own time. Thompson is by no means advocating a return to old ways — 'we should be able to achieve something very much better than a narrow peasant culture' — but he maintains that a knowledge of the past can (indeed, must) assist us in evolving 'an order in which technology serves human ends'. This is both an admirable and a timely book.

W J KEITH

Books Received

- ANTHONY J BADGER, *Prosperity Road, the New Deal, Tobacco, and North Carolina*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1980. 295 pp. Illus, maps. \$20.
- J V BECKETT, *Local Taxation, National Legislation and the Problems of Enforcement*. Bedford Square Press, 1980. 49 pp. £2.50 (postage 25p).
- B J DAVEY, *Ashwell 1830-1914: The decline of a village community*. Leicester University Press, Occasional Paper, Third Series Number 5. 64 pp. Tables, maps. £3.95.
- T M DEVINE and T C SMOUT (eds), *Scottish Economic & Social History*. University of Glasgow, 1981. 151 pp. Tables, charts. £2.
- ALAN EREIRA, *The People's England*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981. 285 pp. Illus, figs. £9.50.
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- PHILIP GASKELL, *Morvern Transformed, a Highland Parish in the Nineteenth Century*. CUP, 1980. 273 pp. Illus. £5.50.
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